

Western Times

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News Brief

Free ration to poor being given from taxpayers' money: Mayawati

Lucknow, May 16 (IANS) Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) President Mayawati lashed out at "BJP and company" on Thursday, saying "they want to take credit for providing free rations to the country's poor."

In a post in Hindi on the social media platform X, Mayawati wrote, "Far from freeing the people of the country from rising inflation, poverty, unemployment and backwardness, BJP and company are bent upon extracting electoral gains for giving the poor a little bit of ration. This is not right as this is not kindness."

She further wrote, "Free ration to the poor is not a favour by the BJP or the government, it comes from the taxpayers' money. Therefore, it is inappropriate to make fun of the poor by asking them for votes in return."

Fire breaks out in Delhi house, four vehicles gutted in blaze

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Four vehicles, including three cars, were gutted in a fire which broke out at a house in Delhi's Badarpur area on Thursday, a fire department official said.

Director of Delhi Fire Services (DFS) Atul Garg said that at 6.19 a.m. a call regarding a blaze at a house in street No. 1, Dharmveer Market, Badarpur was received.

"Three fire tenders were rushed to the site and flames were doused within hours," said Garg. "Fire was in three cars and one Scooty parked at stilt parking of the house which comprises three floors," said Garg.

Army foils infiltration bid on LoC in J&K's Tangdhar sector, two terrorists killed

Srinagar, May 16 (IANS) An infiltration bid was foiled on Thursday by the Army on the Line of Control (LoC) in the Tangdhar sector of J&K's Kupwara district, said officials, adding that two terrorists have been killed.

Officials said that the Army engaged a group of terrorists in sustained gunfire after they made an attempt to sneak into this side of the LoC in the sector. It must be mentioned that Kupwara district is part of the Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency where hectic campaigning is going on these days.

The constituency goes to vote on May 20.

Four killed as bus collides with lorry in TN

Chennai, May 16 (IANS) Four people were killed and many injured when a bus collided with a lorry on the Chennai-Tiruchi national highway in Tamil Nadu on Thursday. According to the local police, the bus lost control while trying to overtake a lorry and collided with it leading to the death of four people and injuries to several people.

On Wednesday, four members of a family were killed when a car they were travelling in collided with a lorry near Mathuranthakam.--IANS

PM Modi targets TMC in UP's Bhadohi

Bhadohi (UP), May 16 (IANS) Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Thursday, mounted a scathing attack on Trinamool Congress (TMC) in Bhadohi -- the lone seat that TMC is contesting in Uttar Pradesh.

"TMC has come to UP on a trial basis. The Congress and Samajwadi Party have already conceded defeat and left Bhadohi. You know the kind of politics that TMC pursues -- it is the politics of appeasement. They insult the Ram temple, clamp a ban on celebrating Ram Navami, give protection to Bangladeshi infiltrators and kill Hindus. Women are targeted and BJP workers are being killed. TMC legislator says he will drown Hindus," he said.

The Prime Minister said that the SP government also gave special protocol to terrorists. The chief of a terror outfit SIMI was released, he added.

"One Bua left SP in Uttar Pradesh because she realised their true politics so they went and got a new Bua from Bengal. I have a question for Babua (read Akhilesh) -- why does your new Bua term people from UP and Bihar as outsiders?" he asked.

He further said that the one factor that brings Congress, SP and TMC together is appeasement politics.

"These people said Ram was an illusion. You know what condition Ayodhya and Kashi was in but now we have completely revamped these

places. If these parties had their way, they would not have allowed the construction of Ram temple," he said.

He said that development was taking place all around and would not stop. "We are developing Vindhyavasini temple, UP had only seven airports but now has 17. This development will benefit the carpet industry of Bhadohi since it has been included in the ODOP list. During the SP regime, the idea was 'one district, one mafia'," he stated.

The Prime Minister said that when he prepares to go to bed, he recalls the work done during the day. "Your love overwhelms me and I feel this is God's gift to me," he said.



JAUNPUR, PM Narendra Modi holds a mace at a public meeting in support of BJP candidate Kripashankar Singh for Lok Sabha elections, in Jaunpur on Thursday. UNI

Party, Deve Gowda family has no idea about Prajwal's whereabouts: JD(S)

Bengaluru, May 16 (IANS) Reeling under the impact of the sex scandal involving Prajwal Revanna who is a JD(S) MP and grandson of former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, the party stated on Thursday that it does not have any idea about the whereabouts of the prime accused in the case.

Prajwal Revanna, who is the NDA's Lok Sabha candidate for the Hassan seat is absconding as the videos showing him sexually assaulting women have taken Karnataka by storm.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru, JD(S) Core Committee President and MLA, GT Deve Gowda claimed that neither party leaders nor the HD Deve Gowda family have any idea about Prajwal Revanna's whereabouts.

The government has issued a Blue Corner notice to 196 countries regarding Prajwal Revanna, and he can only be tracked through this.

"Prajwal Revanna has not been in touch with the leaders since the scandal came to light. No one knows where Prajwal Revanna is," Devegowda stated.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the scandal is carrying out the probe and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah asserted that he believes in the officers.

"The crimes related to the scandal were committed in Chennai city and Malaysia, and in this backdrop, we are demanding an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)," Devegowda stated.

Meanwhile, Prajwal Revanna, who had booked a ticket to Bengaluru from Munich in Germany, did not board the flight on Wednesday.

Sources stated that this is the third time Prajwal Revanna did not board a flight after booking tickets from Germany.

Prajwal Revanna's father, JD(S) MLA HD Revanna, who was jailed and released on conditional bail, has not gone back to his native Holenarasipur town in Hassan District to meet his wife Bhavani since his release.

In turn, Bhavani has also not come to meet him in Bengaluru where he is staying at his father HD Deve Gowda's residence in Padmanabhanagar. He has been visiting temples since his release. Family sources ex-

plained that Deve Gowda and former CM HD Kumaraswamy are upset with her in the backdrop of the events related to her son Prajwal Revanna.

Meanwhile, the SIT has issued a second notice to Bhavani to appear for questioning in the kidnap case of a victim seen in one of the videos.

The SIT has registered cases under IPC Sections 376 (2) N (committing rape repeatedly on same woman), 506 (criminal intimidation), 354 (A) (1) (behaving in unwelcome way, explicit sexual behaviour, demanding sexual favours), 354 (B) (using criminal force on woman) and 354 (C) (voyeurism, capturing image of a woman in a private act without her consent) and Under Sections of the Information Technology Act.

Bogus company dealing in share market busted in Gujarat, 17 arrested

Vadodara, May 16 (IANS) The Gujarat Police busted a bogus company in Vadodara that claimed to be dealing in the share market and arrested 17 people, said officials here.

Police said the accused cheated people of lakhs of rupees by creating a fraudulent company named 'Angel Broking Customer Care' and forming a WhatsApp group to lure victims.

The gang extorted Rs 94.18 lakh from a senior official in a Vadodara-based company. All arrested individuals were produced in court Thursday and were remanded to police custody for two days. The police are now identifying the higher-ups involved in the scam, as it is suspected that more significant figures may be orchestrating these fraud-

ulent activities. According to sources, Ramakrishna Bedundari, originally from Andhra Pradesh and a former top official in Vadodara's cybercrime division, filed the complaint. The accused allegedly sent WhatsApp messages, convincing the victim to trade in the share market under the guise of Angel Security Customer Service. They used falsified documents from Angel

One company and sent links explaining the trading process. An amount of Rs 94.18 lakh was transferred from the complainant's online accounts to various accounts set up by the scammers. Realizing the deceit, the complainant reported the crime to Vadodara's Cyber Crime Police. The police investigation led to the arrest of 17 individuals involved in the scam.

CAPF starts early route marches in Sandeshkhali

Kolkata, May 16 (IANS) The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) have started early route marches at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal in view of the fresh tensions erupting there.

A viral video of a local BJP leader claiming the women's agitation being plotted and orchestrated by the party has gone viral in the area. Sandeshkhali comes under the Basirhat Lok Sabha constituency which is going for polls in the last and seventh phase on June 1.

Sources in the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) said that generally full-fledged route marches in an area do not start so early before the polling day. However, the sources said, keeping in mind the prevailing tension the full-fledged route marches of CAPF have started from Thursday especially in those panchayat areas under Sandeshkhali Assembly constituency where the prevailing tension is maximum.

"This early route-march will ensure complete area domination before the polls which will instill confidence among the voters," a CEO office insider said. The local villagers too have welcomed the development. The CEO office sources said that as per the existing plans in the sixth and seventh phases of polls in the state on May 25 and June 1 respectively, the total deployment of Central forces in the state is likely to be over 1,000 companies which is higher the initial plans of the Election Commission of India (ECI) to increase the phase-wise deployment to a maximum of 920 in the seventh and final phase on June 1.

While in the sixth phase, eight Lok Sabha constituencies in West Bengal will be going to polls, the number in the seventh phase will be nine.

Election-related seizures cross 1,100 crore in Rajasthan

Jaipur, May 16 (IANS) The Chief Electoral Officer of Rajasthan, Praveen Gupta, said on Thursday that in view of the Lok Sabha elections in the state, various enforcement agencies have seized drugs, liquor, precious metals, freebies, and cash worth Rs 1,106 crore since March 1.

These include drugs worth Rs 202.25 crore, liquor worth more than Rs 47 crore, gold and silver valued at Rs 70 crore, and cash amounting to Rs 42 crore, Gupta said.

Besides, other materials worth more than Rs 743.97 crore and freebies worth about Rs 90 lakh

have also been seized during the period under review by different agencies since March 1, the CEO said. From March 1 till now, suspicious items and cash worth more than Rs 40 crore each have been seized in nine districts, out of which Sirhi tops with Rs 68.77 crore, followed by Jaipur (Rs 61.05 crore), and Jhunjhunu (Rs 52.46 crore). Gupta said the state police, excise and narcotics departments, and the Income Tax department were prominent among the enforcement agencies taking action against illegal transportation of suspicious goods.



AMRITSAR, Delhi Chief Minister and AAP Supremo Arvind Kejriwal being welcomed upon his arrival for a rally for Lok Sabha elections, in Amritsar on Thursday. UNI

BJP worker killed in pre-poll violence in Odisha's Ganjam, CM condemns violence

Bhubaneswar, May 16 (IANS) A Bharatiya Janata Party worker died while several others sustained serious injuries in a scuffle with the ruling Biju Janata Dal activists in the Khallikote area of Odisha's Ganjam district, officials said on Thursday.

The violence took place late Wednesday night. The deceased was identified as Dilip Pahan of Srikrushnasaranpur village under Khallikote police limits in the district. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday condemned the act of violence.

"Deeply disturbed and saddened at the very unfortunate and tragic incident of violence in the Khallikote area. Such incidents of violence have no place in our democracy and civil society. I strongly condemn this incident. My deepest condolence to the family who has lost their loved one and praying for early recovery of those who sustained injuries. I am sure police will take strong and exemplary ac-

tion against the perpetrators of this heinous crime," CM Patnaik posted on the 'X' account. Expressing deep concern over the incident, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Odisha, Nikunja Bihari Dhal on Thursday instructed the Ganjam district collector and Superintendent of Police to take immediate steps to establish peace by getting the pre-poll violence under control in the district. Local sources claimed that the deceased along with other BJP workers, who recently joined the party after leaving the ruling BJD, were putting up election campaign posters at Srikrushnasaranpur village late Wednesday night. A scuffle broke out when some BJD workers objected to putting up the posters. Several persons, including Dilip, sustained serious injuries in the pre-poll fight.

They were immediately rushed to the nearby hospital in Khallikote. They were later shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur

for advanced treatment. Dilip succumbed to the injuries while undergoing treatment at the MKCG hospital.

The BJP workers on Thursday protested outside the Khallikote police station demanding immediate arrest of the attackers. They also blocked roads connecting Khallikote to Bhubaneswar bringing traffic to a halt.

Anjali murder case: Accused still at large, ex-K'taka CM attacks Congress govt

Bengaluru, May 16 (IANS) As the accused in the Anjali Ambigera murder case was still at large, BJP leader and former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the Congress government, saying the law and order system had collapsed in Karnataka. Anjali was stabbed to

death in her residence by a jilted lover on Wednesday in front of her family members. Despite the family informing the police about the threat earlier, the police had not taken any action. This incident, which occurred in Hubballi soon after the gruesome murder of MCA student Neha Hiremath on the college campus, has sparked

public outrage. Shettar said the killer in Anjali's case should receive strict punishment. He criticized the police in Hubballi for not taking action, citing a lack of coordination between officers and the government.

"The politics should not be played out in Anjali's murder case," he added. Meanwhile, BJP party workers in Hubballi staged a protest march condemning the failure of the state government to ensure the safety of women.

The police are yet to arrest the accused, Vishwa, also known as Girish. Two police teams have been formed to apprehend him. The police department has suspended the police inspector and a woman constable for negligence. However, the demand is being made to shunt out the Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner Renuka Sukumar for failing to sensitize the police cadre to act swiftly in issues concerning women safety.

In a shocking incident,

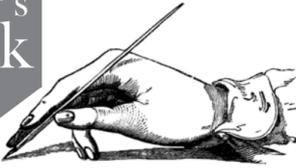
jilted lover Vishwa barged into Anjali's house and repeatedly stabbed her to death. The incident happened in the early hours of Wednesday in Hubballi city. The accused had previously threatened Anjali, warning her that she would meet the same fate as Neha Hiremath, who was brutally stabbed to death on a college campus recently in Hubballi.

Congress corporator Niranjan Hiremath -- the father of an MCA student Neha Hiremath -- had criticised state Home Minister G. Parameshwara over the latest incident of murder in the city. Speaking to reporters after visiting Anjali's family members in Hubballi, he said: "I want to convey to the state government and the Home Department that Minister for Home G. Parameshwara is a failure. If you (Parameshwara) are not capable, you better resign and go home. If you can't transfer the Hubballi-Dharwad Commissioner Renuka Sukumar, large-scale protests will be staged."



LUCKNOW, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav and AAP president and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addressing a joint press conference at Samajwadi Party office, in Lucknow on Thursday. AAP leader Sanjay Singh also seen in the picture. UNI

From Editor's Desk



Niti Aayog's alarm bells on cancer detection: C the signs Government must heed warning in Niti Aayog report that flags gaps in cancer detection. Investment in training grassroots professionals is needed

It's well-known that spotting signs of cancer at an early stage significantly increases the possibilities of surviving the disease. In India, government projects, including the National Programme for the Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke, recognise this necessity. These programmes have given special emphasis to checking for cervical, oral and breast cancers — they constitute a third of all cases of the disease in the country — before symptoms appear. Yet, successive National Family Health Surveys have revealed that a very small percentage of people in the vulnerable age group — those over 30 years of age — get screened for malignancy. Turning 1,50,000 health and wellness centres (HWCs) into nodal points for cancer detection under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) could have proved to be a game changer. The introduction of screening facilities at these primary healthcare centres could have reduced accessibility-related problems to a great extent. But a Niti Aayog report has flagged "huge gaps" in the performance of these HWCs. Less than 10 per cent of these centres had completed one round of screening for non-communicable diseases, including cancer, says the report. In recent years, India has done well in piloting low-tech approaches to cancer screening that can be delivered at scale by community-level workers. AB-PMJAY makes use of these technologies. Global experience shows that the trust enjoyed by grassroots-level professionals is a big positive when it comes to screening people for diseases that may not show any symptoms. The government, therefore, did the right thing in roping in ASHA workers in its project. However, it does not seem to have invested adequately in the next steps. Given the low awareness of the disease, it was imperative that these frontline professionals were educated about cancer prevention protocols and trained to use the screening techniques. Much before the NITI Aayog's study, analyses conducted with smaller sample sizes had underlined that ASHA workers should be sensitised to risk factors, symptoms and, in fact, the need for screening itself. These studies also emphasised the need to improve the working conditions of these low-paid and overburdened workers.

AstraZeneca Covid vax linked to another rare fatal blood clotting disorder

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) British-Swedish pharma giant AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine, made in collaboration with Oxford University has been found to raise the risk of vaccine-induced immune thrombocytopenia and thrombosis (VITT) — a rare but fatal blood clotting disorder, claimed researchers on Thursday. While not new, VITT emerged as a new disease following adenovirus vector-based Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine — sold as Covishield in India and Vaxzevria in Europe — at the height of the Covid pandemic in 2021. "An unusually dangerous blood autoantibody directed against a protein termed platelet factor 4 (or PF4)" was found as the reason for VITT. In separate research in 2023, scientists from Canada, North America, Germany and Italy described a virtually identical disorder with the same

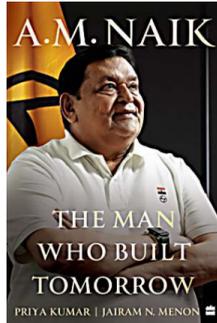
PF4 antibody that was fatal in some cases after natural adenovirus (common cold) infection. Now in a new research, Flinders University in Australia and other international experts found that the PF4 antibodies in both adenovirus infection-associated VITT and classic adenoviral vector VITT share identical molecular fingerprints or signatures. "Indeed, the pathways of lethal antibody production in these disorders must be virtually identical and have similar genetic risk factors," said Professor Tom Gordon from Flinders. The researcher noted that the

"findings have the important clinical implication that lessons learned from VITT are applicable to rare cases of blood clotting after adenovirus (a common cold) infections, as well as having implications for vaccine development". The same team had in a 2022 study "cracked the molecular code of the PF4 antibody and identified a genetic risk factor". Their new findings, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, also have important implications for improving vaccine safety. The research comes after AstraZeneca "accepted, in a legal doc-

ument submitted to the High Court in February, that its Covid vaccine 'can, in very rare cases, cause Thrombotic Thrombocytopenic Syndrome (TTS)". TTS is a rare side effect that can cause people to have blood clots and a low blood platelet count. It has been linked to the death of at least 81 people in the UK as well as hundreds of serious injuries. The company has also voluntarily withdrawn "marketing authorisation" of its Covid vaccine from Europe and other global markets. — IANS

'Passion, devotion, conviction, commitment - four words that can change your life.'

Mumbai In 1964, A.M. Naik, a twenty-two-year-old engineering graduate, chanced upon a recruitment advertisement for Larsen & Toubro. Despite almost botching up his final interview, Naik was hired. 'I've sacked thirty-eight engineers - don't be number thirty-nine' is what Naik's boss T. Baker told him on his first day at work. Thus began an era of relentless hard work, infectious zeal and remarkable achievements, which not only elevated Naik in the L&T hierarchy, but also helped transform the company into a multinational conglomerate with presence in more than fifty countries.



What makes Naik the energy powerhouse he is and a workaholic, even at eighty-one? What motivates him to forge selfless relationships? What is it about him that inspires those who work alongside him to walk that extra mile for any assignment? A powerful story of grit and determination, passion and resilience, A.M. Naik: The Man Who Built Tomorrow presents a rare look at the person behind the leader and the many worlds he inhabits - from business and industry to nation-building and philanthropy. What's next for the man whose motto in life is to start walking towards the next goalpost as soon as one is achieved?

A.M. Naik, Chairman Emeritus, Larsen & Toubro says, "I have always considered myself fortunate to be in a position of service to nation, industry and society, while doing my bit to building a new tomorrow. I will be very happy if the lessons drawn from this journey from a small village to the world of business, prove useful to current and future generations."

Priya Kumar says, "A.M. Naik is a university of insight and inspiration. Writing this book has been a journey of professional evolution for me, and I hope it inspires the same in its readers."

Jairam N. Menon says, "Everyone knows

that reading books is educative. I found writing can be even more so! Writing this book has been for me a lesson on how to dream bigger than I have ever dreamt before."

Sachin Sharma, Associate Publisher, HarperCollins says, "Mr. A.M. Naik's exemplary life is a proof that hard work and passion can move mountains. While the success story of L&T and its inspirational architect is well known, Priya Kumar and Jairam Menon have done a brilliant job in bringing us the heart and mind of the leader."

PRAISE FOR A.M. NAIK: THE MAN WHO BUILT TOMORROW

"A.M. Naik is among those rare people who combine vision and execution. His deep sense of patriotism and keen intellect combined have enabled him to relentlessly pursue the mission of establishing India as a global leader in the manufacturing arena. Naik is an amazing leader, who can conceive bold ideas, transmit his passion to his team and then provide the leadership to realize those ideas. His legendary people skills are well known. He always had the courage and the conviction to chart a new course of vision for his organization, one that combined the hallowed traditions of the enterprise with an entrepreneurial zeal, a nationalistic fervour and a strong emphasis on wealth creation. It is this new avatar of Larsen & Toubro that most of us are familiar with today. - Mukesh Ambani, Chairman and Managing Director, Reliance Industries

Anil Manibhai Naik is an exceptional individual, whom I have had

the pleasure of meeting on several occasions over the last three decades. A true nation-builder, he built an industry, equivalent to the best in the world, and has done so much for the country. Also, beyond his professional achievements, he has consistently shown a deep devotion to the community. It was a few years ago when Apollo had the opportunity to collaborate with the hospitals set up by his trust in Navsari, Gujarat. What I had previously only heard about became evident before my eyes: Naik is undoubtedly one of the world's most outstanding business leaders. His unwavering dedication and entrepreneurial spirit transformed L&T into a unique global organization. — Dr Prathap C. Reddy, Founder-chairman, Apollo Hospitals

"The best of professionals are focused on adding value through all their efforts. Clearly, A.M. Naik is an excellent example of such a professional. Throughout his career, Naik has tried his best to add value to everything he has undertaken—leading a business, working with the government and engaging with people and societal issues. — Azim Premji, Founder-chairman, Wipro

"Few people carry the flag of India Inc. as proudly as Mr A.M. Naik does. He can be aggressive, even combative, in defending the interests of his country and of the company of which he is at the helm. All of us in industry and business know that Naik's heart is in the right place. I have known him for decades now, and our interactions have always been stimulating because he is restless with the status quo. — Deepak Parekh, Former chairman, HDFC

"Naik is more than a doyen of the industry. He is a multidimension-

—A.M. Naik

al personality whom the Sanskrit description ashtavadhani fits. A natural-born leader, he is a rare visionary with a towering engineering mind and matching commercial expertise. Endowed with a matchless brain-and-brawn combination that challenged his age, he understands law, accounts, finance and economics like any domain expert. — S. Gurumurthy, Writer, journalist and corporate advisor

"Having served on the board of Larsen & Toubro and as a banker to the group, I am a first-hand admirer of the many facets of Naik—from the astute, hard-driving business leader to the gutsy entrepreneur, to increasingly now—a committed and outcome-oriented philanthropist. There is a lot to learn from his zestful, never-say-die approach to life. — Naina Lal Kidwai, Chairperson, Rothschild & Co

ABOUT THE AUTHORS - Priya Kumar is the author of sixteen books, and a specialist in distilling the accomplishments of corporate figures, entrepreneurs and sports stars into inspirational biographies.

Jairam N. Menon is a versatile writer, whose long experience of working in L&T, and in proximity to the corporate office, gave him a ring-side view of A.M. Naik in action.

IndiaSkills Competition 2024 Begins, 900+ candidates to participate in 61 trades

New Delhi, The IndiaSkills Competition 2024 — the country's biggest skill competition designed to demonstrate the highest standards of skilling commenced today and will go on till 19th May 2024. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) organised an inauguration ceremony at Yashobhoomi, Dwarka which witnessed the participation of 900+ candidates from 30+ states and Union Territories and 400+ industry experts.

During the competition, participants will showcase their diverse skills and talent on a national platform across 61 skills — from traditional crafts to cutting-edge technologies. While 47 skills competition will be held onsite, 14 will be held offsite in Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat keeping in mind the best infrastructure available. Participants will also participate in 9 exhibition skills like Drone-Filming making, Textile-Weaving, Leather-Shoemaking, and prosthetics-makeup. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), working under the aegis of MSDE,

is implementing the event. The opening ceremony was graced by Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary, MSDE, Shri Nilambuj Sharan, Senior Economic Advisor, MSDE, Smt Trishaljeet Sethi, DG Training, MSDE, Smt Sonal Mishra, Joint Secretary, MSDE, Smt Hena Usman Joint Secretary, MSDE, Shri Ved Mani Tiwari, officiating COO, National Skill Development Corporation. All the participating states also showcased their teams and cultural diaspora. This was followed by a cultural programme where the audience witnessed different dance forms from across the country.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary, MSDE said that the IndiaSkills 2024 is not just a competition; it is a celebration of skill, innovation, and determination. It is a testament to the boundless potential of our youth and their ability to shape the future of our nation. It is a platform where dreams are realised, and aspirations are nurtured. He further said that he is confident

about the capabilities of the candidates and is hopeful that they will excel in WorldSkills 2024.

For the next three days, the participants will be competing in a variety of skill from Construction and Building Technology and Creative Arts and Fashion to Information and Communication Technology, Manufacturing and Engineering Technology, and Transportation and Logistics. The event will close on 19th May with a grand closing ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Ved Mani Tiwari, CEO NSDC, MD NSDC-Cl said that IndiaSkills is not just a competition; it's a platform that nurtures aspirations and fosters creativity. Through its implementation, NSDC not only propels us to the forefront but also paves the path toward a more inclusive society. Alongside WorldSkills competitions, IndiaSkills plays a pivotal role in fostering equality by generating opportunities for interaction among candidates, industry leaders, education partners, governments, and partner countries.

BJP raises questions on Bibhav being seen with CM Kejriwal in Lucknow

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) The BJP on Thursday lashed out at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as Bibhav Kumar, embroiled in a controversy involving the party's Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, was allegedly seen with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and party MP Sanjay Singh in Lucknow.

CM Kejriwal, who had reached Lucknow on Wednesday night, addressed a Press conference on Thursday.

The BJP has raised questions over Bibhav Kumar, being seen with them in Lucknow and has strongly criticised AAP as well as MP Sanjay Singh, who is allegedly trying to bring about a rapprochement between Kejriwal and Swati Maliwal, after the Delhi CM's assistant Bibhav Kumar allegedly misbehaved with her.

Delhi BJP President V Sachdeva in a video byte said, "The incident involving Swati Maliwal is not an accident but a conspiracy. Sanjay Singh himself had said that

Bibhav, who is said to be Arvind Kejriwal's PA, misbehaved with Swati Maliwal at the Chief Minister's residence and the party will take cognisance of it.

He had also stated that Kejriwal is angry with Bibhav. But all three



were seen together at Lucknow Airport last night. Lies, deceit and deception which are in the character of the Aam Aadmi Party were once again visible."

Sachdeva also raised questions over the death of AAP worker Santosh Koli, who was a close associate of CM Kejriwal from the time of

the movement, and said that whenever there is talk of respect and self-respect of women, the character of Arvind Kejriwal and his party appears to be hollow. The incident that happened with Swati Maliwal is not the first incident, he alleged.

"Today I also remember Santosh Koli whose tragic death is still under doubt. After all, what is the reason that every woman who goes to a high position in Aam Aadmi Party is not able to stay there?"

Two days ago, Sanjay Singh was saying that Bibhav had a hand in the Swati Maliwal incident and that Arvind Kejriwal would take cognisance of it but Kejriwal is roaming around Lucknow with Bibhav. From this, the character of the Aam Aadmi Party can be understood, which is just looting, cheating and deceit," the BJP leader added. — IANS

Farmer Associations' Report Reveals Remarkable 300 percent surge in Agriculture Budget Allocation over past 9 Years

New Delhi, The Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA), a non-profit organization representing the cause of millions of farmers and farm workers of commercial crops across the States of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka etc. convened a seminar today at the Constitution Club of India, New Delhi - Ensuring Farmer Livelihoods: Enhancing Farmer Incomes Through Sustainable Farming Practices.

During the seminar, FAIFA released a Report titled - TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA'S AGRICULTURE which highlighted key achievements in the agriculture sector in the last decade. The Report also put forward strategies to enhance farmer incomes in a sustainable manner. The seminar was graced by Sh. GVL Narasimha Rao, Former Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha. The Key Speakers in the seminar were Prof MV Ashok, Senior Adviser BAIFF Research and Development Foundation Pune and Former Chief General Manager, NABARD and Dr. JP Tandon, Former Director, Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

While addressing the audience during the seminar Chief Guest Sh.

GVL Narasimha Rao, Former Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha said, "With my extensive experience in the agriculture sector including the dairy sector, I understand the challenges confronting farmers. So I can say with some conviction that farmers must unite and collaborate to address these challenges collectively. Through initiatives such as Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) or cooperatives, they can harness the strength of the collective organization to better their circumstances and secure a brighter future for themselves."

"Indian agriculture is currently undergoing a significant transformation, driven by the remarkable accomplishments of our government, under the leadership of our Honourable Prime Minister. Over the past decade, we have consistently achieved a commendable growth rate of 4 percent in the sector and I am optimistic that this momentum will only accelerate in the coming years, surpassing even the 4 percent mark. With the projected annual population growth rate of 2.5 percent, our nation is poised to not only meet its own food requirements but also have surplus produce for export to global markets. It's a 'Modi Ki Guarantee' that in the next 10

years there will be bumper growth for farmers and the agricultural sector." Sh. Narasimha added.

Mr. Javare Gowda, President, Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) on the release of the Report said, "The strides made by the government in the agriculture sector and for farmers are commendable. Efforts are being tirelessly invested in augmenting farmer income and ensuring their security, aiding our invaluable 'Annadata' in feeding our nation and the world too. Key policy initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) have played pivotal roles in extending financial and income support to farmers. For instance, the PM-KISAN Samman Yojana annually provides direct financial assistance to lakhs of farmers, including marginal and small farmers, totalling over Rs 2.80 lakh crore disbursed so far. Also, crop insurance coverage has been extended to 4 crore farmers under PMFBY."

Mr. Ather Mathean, Vice-President, Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA), "The MSP initiatives by the government have

been a tremendous relief for farmers across the country. The significant increase in Minimum Support Prices for various crops has provided much-needed stability and assurance to farmers, enabling them to invest confidently in their agricultural endeavors. We also earnestly appeal to the government to continue this commendable work and further promote digital platforms for the benefit of farmers. Platforms like e-NAM hold immense potential to revolutionize the agricultural landscape by facilitating seamless online trading of agriculture and horticulture commodities, empowering farmers with greater market access and fairer prices. Moreover, initiatives like the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund will play a pivotal role in boosting farmer incomes in the long run, fostering sustainability and prosperity within the agricultural sector."

Launched on July 8, 2020, the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) is a financing facility aimed at developing post-harvest management infrastructure and community farm assets, focusing on infrastructure at the farm gate. The scheme offers medium to long-term debt financing for viable projects through interest subvention and credit guarantee support.

Andhra Pradesh CS, DGP to appear before ECI in Delhi over poll violence

Amaravati, May 16 (IANS) Andhra Pradesh Chief Secretary, KS Jawahar Reddy and Director General of Police (DGP) Harish Kumar Gupta left for Delhi on Thursday to give an explanation to the Election Commission of India (ECI) in connection with the violence during and after polling on Monday. They were accompanied by Ad-

ditional Director General (ADG) Kumar Vishwajeet.

The Chief Secretary and DGP were reportedly summoned to appear at the ECI's headquarters in the national Capital and explain reasons for failure to contain violence on polling day and after polling.

They have been asked to explain why the administration failed to take precautionary measures to prevent violence. The poll panel has taken serious note of the incidents of violence during simultaneous elections to the state Assembly and Lok Sabha.

Several incidents of post-poll violence also occurred in the last two days. The ECI is reportedly unhappy over top officials failing to take adequate measures to prevent the violence despite Intelligence reports about the apprehension of violence. Violence was reported from Macherla, Narasaraopet, Chandragiri and Tadipatri constituencies. The Chief Secretary and DGP have also been asked to explain steps taken after the violence to prevent its recurrence as the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) for the General Election is still in force, and the ECI has asked top officials to ensure such incidents are not repeated. Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena said that the ECI has given directions to book cases and arrest all those who damaged EVMS during polling. It also ordered action against police officials and other election staff who deliberately indulged in dereliction of their duties. After the ECI's summons, the Chief Secretary met the DGP and ADG Intelligence to review the situation and to put in place precautionary measures to check further violence. — IANS



ditional Director General (ADG) Kumar Vishwajeet.

The Chief Secretary and DGP were reportedly summoned to appear at the ECI's headquarters in the national Capital and explain reasons for failure to contain violence on polling day and after polling. They have been asked to explain why the administration failed to take precautionary measures to prevent violence. The poll panel has taken serious note of the incidents of violence during simultaneous elections



Nayanthara and her husband Vignesh Shivan bond over a game of Monopoly

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) 'Lady Superstar' Nayanthara spent some quality time with her husband, filmmaker Vignesh Shivan, over a game of Monopoly.

Shivan took to his Instagram stories and shared motley glimpses of Nayanthara while playing.

He first posted a video of Nayanthara, who was filming him as he moved his phone camera towards her. Shivan then shared a clip showcasing the Monopoly game and later panned the camera to Nayanthara, who was seen talking to him while he filmed her.

The actress also posted a video on her Instagram, featuring Shivan with the track 'Chor' by Justh playing in the background.

Bhumi Pednekar struggled with confidence, turned to fashion for 'self-discovery'

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Actress Bhumi Pednekar revealed that she struggled with confidence while growing up and said that she turned to fashion as a form of self-discovery.

"When I was growing up, I struggled with feeling confident, especially because of the pressure to fit into certain beauty ideals. But instead of letting that define me, I turned to fashion as a form of self-discovery," Bhumi said.

The actress added: "As I've gotten older, my relationship and understanding of beauty and fashion have evolved."

Bhumi said that it's not just about looking good anymore or following trends.

"It's about embracing my individuality, expressing my personality, and celebrating what makes me unique. Today, fashion and beauty are a medi-

um through which I can express myself, my emotional canvas, and my state of mind." Even though Bhumi has received mixed views over her fashion and style statement, Bhumi will still experiment with her looks as she loves it.

"I love experiment-

ing. I just want to have fun with fashion, and I think I'm doing this with all my heart, which is why people are appreciating my fashion-forward turn. It is good when I can work both ends of the spectrum - from relatable to edgy fashion," she said.

The actress added: "People tend to box someone, and it happened to me too. In maximum films that I have done so far, I have played a girl from a small town, and that has set the perception that I can look amazing being this girl next door."

Bhumi loves it that way, but her fashion is to shatter that perception and show people who she really is and how she wants to be seen. "I'm a young, confident Indian woman who is expressing herself through fashion, and I'm enjoying the love that my looks are getting," said Bhumi.



Priyanka Chopra is back in LA, says 'being home is feeding my soul'

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Priyanka Chopra Jonas is ecstatic to be back in Los Angeles after shooting for her film 'Head of State' in France.

Priyanka took to her Instagram stories and shared her happiness.

The actress posted a picture from her balcony along with a glimpse of her home's interior.

"Being home... is feeding my soul," she described her feeling after being back.

The actress had been shooting for 'Head of State' in Nice, France. The film also stars Idris Elba and John Cena. It is an action-comedy film directed by Ilya Naishuller.

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan wears arm sling as she heads to Cannes with daughter Aaradhya

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Bollywood star Aishwarya Rai Bachchan was joined by her daughter Aaradhya Bachchan to attend the 77th Cannes Film Festival at the French Riviera.

The mother-daughter duo were spotted at the airport, where Aishwarya, who appeared to have sustained an injury, was seen wearing an arm sling.

The actress was dressed in a navy blue trench coat paired with black pants.

Aaradhya opted for a casual look as well, wearing a sweatshirt and joggers.

This is not the first time Aishwarya will be seen walking the red carpet at



the prestigious event. She has been a part of the Cannes Film Festival for over a decade, and her red carpet looks have often gone viral on social media.

Aishwarya first walked the red carpet at Cannes in 2002, wearing a saree

by Neeta Lulla for the premiere of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film 'Devdas', starring Shah Rukh Khan.

Other celebrities expected to attend the festival include Aditi Rao Hydari, Shobita Dhulipala, and Kiara Advani.

--IANS

Junaid Khan starts prepping for upcoming yet-untitled film opposite Khushi Kapoor

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan's son, Junaid Khan, has started prepping for his third yet-untitled film with actress Khushi Kapoor. A source close to the production said: "Junaid has already finished shooting for two films, and now he's ready to dive into his third project, which is very different from the previous two."

"His untitled next will see him sharing screen space with Khushi Kapoor, which has piqued curiosity and for good reasons." Junaid has wrapped up

his projects, 'Maharaja' and a yet-untitled film with Sai Pallavi.

'Maharaja' is reportedly inspired by the 1862 Maharaja Libel Case and tells the story of a religious leader who takes legal action against a newspaper for claiming that he shares inappropriate relationships with his followers. 'Maharaja', w Ahlawat and Sharvari Wagh, will reportedly have Junaid play a reporter. However, other details of the film are still under wraps.

Kartik Aaryan packs a punch, flaunts toned abs in second poster of 'Chandu Champion'

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Kartik Aaryan on Thursday unveiled the second poster for the upcoming sports drama 'Chandu Champion', leaving fans in awe of his impeccably sculpted physique.

The first-look poster of 'Chandu Champion' featured Kartik in a never-before-seen avatar, wearing a 'langot'.

The new poster shows the 33-year-old actor wearing boxer shorts, flaunting his toned abs while he closes his fist with wrestling gloves on. The intense black-and-white poster shows sweat and blood on Kartik's eyebrows.



Sharing the poster on social media, Kartik wrote: "In the ring of life you have to keep fighting till your last breath to become a champion... Champion aa raha hai..."

Tisca Chopra gets all 'caffeine'd up' with 'gold-plated coffee' in Dubai

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Actress Tisca Chopra is soaking in Dubai life as she sipped on a 24-carat gold-plated coffee in the luxurious city, known as the Venice of the Gulf.

Tisca on Thursday morning took to Instagram stories and shared a video and a picture.

In the clip, she showcased her 24-carat gold-plated coffee, stirring the gold leaves with a spoon.

She captioned it: "Mornings like this." The actress then shared a picture of herself dressed in a white T-shirt and denim as she smiled at the camera. Tisca wrote in the caption: "Caffeine'd up."



Kiara Advani heads to Cannes looking cool in beige spring coat

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Actress Kiara Advani, who will next be seen in the upcoming Telugu film 'Game Changer', has left Mumbai to attend the 77th Cannes Film Festival.

The actress was spotted at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, arriving in style as she was clicked by the shutterbugs.

She wore a light-brown long jacket paired with a cream-coloured outfit and matching sneakers, with her hair tied in a messy bun. Kiara will represent India on the Red Cinema International Film Festival's

Kiara Advani heads to Cannes looking cool in beige spring coat matching sneakers

panel about global incentives and filming at La Plage Des Palmes on May 18. She will also attend the Cinema Gala dinner hosted by Vanity Fair at the Cannes.

Other actresses like Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Aditi Rao Hydari, and Shobita Dhulipala will also be at the Cannes Film Festival this year.

India has a notable representation at the prestigious film festival this year, with seven films being screened under different sections.

Filmmaker Payal Kapadia's film 'All We Imagine as Light' is the first Indian film in 30 years, since 'Swaham', to be screened in the main segment (Palme d'Or) of the festival on May 23.

The Malayalam film follows the story of two roommates who serve as nurses at a hospital. How love and self-discovery bring about a change in their perspectives forms the crux of the story.

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Kerala: Family protests with dead body outside Air India SATS office

Thiruvananthapuram, May 16 (IANS) With the mortal remains of 39-year-old Rajesh, a protest began on Thursday morning outside the office of Air India SATS here to highlight the treatment meted out by the airline to Amritha, now his widow.

Amritha had reached the airport here on May 8 to be with her ailing husband N. Rajesh, who was in a hospital in Muscat after he suffered a heart attack.

She failed to be with her dying husband after Air India Express cabin crew began a strike. Despite several attempts to reach Muscat, she failed to go and on Monday, Rajesh passed away.

On Thursday morning, the body of Rajesh was received by his relatives at the airport and they took the body to the office of Air India SATS near the airport in Thiruvananthapuram.

After placing the body in front of the office, his relatives stood in silence.

Amritha's uncle broke into tears and said that had Air India officials made some arrangements for her to be with Rajesh, his life might have been saved.

SC fixes July 10 for hearing of ex-TN Minister Senthil Balaji's bail plea

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) The Supreme Court on Thursday fixed July 10 for hearing the bail plea of DMK leader and former Tamil Nadu Minister V. Senthil Balaji, who was arrested last year in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged cash-for-jobs scam.

A bench presided over by Justice Abhay S. Oka decided to defer the hearing after it was apprised that Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Enforcement Directorate (ED), was on his legs before another bench dealing with Kejriwal's petition challenging ED arrest in the excise policy case.

In an earlier hearing, senior advocate Aryama Sundaram, appearing for Balaji, apprised the Bench, also comprising Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, that the DMK leader has remained in custody since June last year. It may be recalled that the top court had declined to pass any interim order staying the February 28 order of the Madras High Court, which had dismissed Balaji's bail petition.

Criminal opens fire at Rajasthan cops after snatching pistol

Jaipur, May 16 (IANS) A history-sheeter, carrying a reward of Rs 1.25 lakh on his head, snatched the pistol of a sub-inspector and opened fire at the police team while he was being brought from Delhi to Jaipur, said officials on Thursday.

The incident happened in the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. In retaliation, the cop fired at the history-sheeter's leg and was later admitted to Sawai Mansingh (SMS) Hospital.

Additional DCP North Bajrang Singh said, "A case of firing and extortion was registered against Rakesh Kumar Yadav in Vidyadhar Nagar police station. He was carrying a reward as he was absconding for a long time. Police received a tip that the accused was in Assam and hence a team was sent to Dibrugarh as he was hiding in a village there. On May 13, he was arrested from Dibrugarh and brought to Delhi."

"Three policemen were sent from Jaipur to Delhi. When the criminal was being brought to Jaipur on the intervening night of Wednesday-Thursday, the accused asked to stop the car to go to the bathroom at 12.30 in the night. He then snatched the S-I's pistol and started firing soon after the vehicle was stopped near Daulatpura (Jaipur).

ED can't arrest accused after special court has taken cognizance on money laundering complaint, rules SC

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) The Supreme Court on Thursday held that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) cannot arrest an accused on money laundering charges after cognizance has been taken by the special court on the probe agency's complaint.

"After hearing the accused, the Special Court must pass an order on the application after recording brief reasons. While hearing the application, the court may permit custody only if it is satisfied that custodial interrogation is required," said the Bench, also comprising Justice Ujjal Bhuyan.

However, a person not arrayed as an accused in the complaint may be arrested by the ED fulfilling the mandate of Section 19 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, the apex court said. Further, it added that a person not arrested during the money laundering probe but appearing before the special court pursuant to the summons issued under PMLA need not satisfy stringent twin conditions for grant of bail. Under Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), twin tests must be met to obtain bail.

Mumbai hoarding crash: Death toll rises to 16 as two more bodies recovered

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Two more bodies were recovered here from the debris at the site of the giant hoarding crash of May 13, taking the toll to 16, the BMC Disaster Control said here on Thursday.

The bodies of a male and a female were found in a highly decomposed state and have been identified as Manoj Chansoria, 60, and Anita Chansoria, 59. The rescue work is still underway at the site of Chhedha Nagar for the fourth day after the monstrous hoarding collapse. The rescue operation on Wednesday also led to the recovery of several vehicles buried under the debris, raising fears of more casualties. The incident sent shockwaves in Mumbai which is dotted by 1025 big and small hoardings, besides many others on railways properties. The BMC has started yanking off all illegal or oversized hoardings violating the permissible size of 40x40 feet (1600 sq feet).

Six of family killed in road accident in Odisha's Keonjhar

Bhubaneswar, May 16 (IANS) Six members of a family were killed in a road accident on the National Highway-520 at Champua in Odisha's Keonjhar district, said officials on Thursday.

The accident happened late Wednesday evening when the car lost control and rammed into a stationary truck. "Their car lost its balance due to the sudden application of brake and rammed into a stationary truck near Rimuli under Champua Police limits. Another speeding truck following the car hit it from behind. All the family members, including three women and a six-year-old girl, died on the spot. The accident happened due to overspeeding by the drivers of both the vehicles," said a police official. The deceased were identified as Phulanti Palai, Sanjay Mahakud, Lucy Palai, Sandhya Mahakud, Pihu Mahakud, Pramod Palai of Barbil area of Keonjhar district.

Outgoing Rajkot BJP MP Mohan Kundariya gets elected to NAFED

By Staff Reporter

Ahmedabad, Former Union minister and outgoing BJP MP from Rajkot, Mohan Kundariya, and Deputy Speaker of Gujarat Assembly, Jetha Bharwad, were elected to the board of directors of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) on Wednesday after Magan Vadaviya, a member of the outgoing board, and three others withdrew from the race.

Kundariya, who was not fielded by the BJP in the ongoing Lok Sabha election, was elected unopposed to the board of directors from the lone Gujarat seat in the constituency of primary agricultural cooperative societies

(PACS). His election to the board of NAFED came after four other candidates from Gujarat withdrew their candidature. They were Magan Vadaviya, a member of NAFED's outgoing board of directors and vice-chairman of Rajkot District Cooperative (RDC) Bank; Amrut Desai from Banaskantha district; Mahesh Patel from Sabarkantha district and Jashwant Pate from Kapadvanj in Kheda.

Bharwad, who is also the incumbent chairman of Panchmahal District Cooperative Milk Producers Union Limited - popularly known as Panchamrut Dairy - was elected unopposed from Gujarat's lone seat in state federations' constituency, as he was the only candidate to file

his nomination. Bharwad is also a member of board of directors of Gujarat State Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited (Gujcomasol). Incumbent Gujcomasol Chairman Dilip Sanghani is also the chairman of Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited of India (IFFCO) as well as a member of the outgoing NAFED board.

Also Read | MP Report card: Mohan Kundariya, BJP Constituency - Rajkot Vadaviya said that he withdrew his candidature going by the spirit of cooperation.

"It was a decision taken with the spirit of cooperation. I had received no instructions from the BJP to withdraw from the race," he told The Indian Express.

Vadodara residents complain of 'overcharging' prepaid smart meters

By Staff Reporter

Ahmedabad, For the second day in a row, the offices of Madhya Gujarat Vij Corporation Limited (MGVCL) in Vadodara witnessed stormy scenes as consumers from the Fatehgunj area protested the installation of smart meters at their homes with some complaining that the power supply was snapped due to "non-recharge".

A few residents also complained of indiscriminate deduction of the prepaid amount, with the amount going into negative balance in some cases.

While the power discom has clarified that the outstanding amount from

the old meter has been added to the newly installed smart meter and deducted together, the residents accused MGVCL of installing the new devices without educating them about its functioning. Meanwhile, the issue also took a political turn with the INDIA bloc announcing an agitation from Thursday.

According to Fatehgunj resident Manhar Rajput, who led Wednesday's agitation at the local GEB sub-station, said hundreds of homes have been without electricity. "The smart meters have snapped because they have not recharged their balance... There has been no explanation on the process or

how it works. Those who managed to recharge on the smart app have lost the entire balance in a matter of hours, going into negative balance and leading to disconnection," he complained. Terming the pre-paid smart meters a "new way of corruption", he demanded the reinstallation of the old meters. Another Fatehgunj resident, requesting anonymity, said he had recharged the smart meter with Rs 8,000 - an estimated bill to last two months in summer. But the balance reduced drastically within a week, he complained. "I have raised the complaint with the GEB, but they have no answers. We have been told that the meters are

Thunderstorms hit Saurashtra, Kutch; two killed in Porbandar

By Staff Reporter

Ahmedabad, At least two persons were killed as dust storms, hailstorms and thunderstorms hit Saurashtra and Kutch again on Wednesday, giving relief to people from the scorching heat but worrying farmers who are in the midst of harvesting their summer crops.

Unseasonal rains lashed parts of Gujarat on Wednesday - the third straight day - with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting more showers. According to the IMD, light rain along with thunderstorms are expected in several districts of the state in the next two days.

Two men were killed in Porbandar district after

being hit by lightning bolts as the district was hit by a thunderstorm. The district disaster control room in Porbandar said that Jiva Karavadra (60) was killed after being hit by a lightning bolt while he was passing through an agricultural farm in Advana village.

The second death was reported from nearby Sili village when Babu Odedra (30) was hit by a lightning bolt while he was transporting silt dug from the bed of a local pond.

Thunderstorms and dust storms were reported in parts of Rajkot and Surendranagar districts as well. Rajkot city was hit by a dust storm followed by thunderstorms, catching commuters unawares. In Kutch, hailstorms were re-

ported from parts of the district.

Moderate to light rain was recorded in Saurashtra and Kutch as well as in Dang district, a statement by the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC) said. Between 6 am and 6 pm on Wednesday, Muli taluka of Surendranagar district received 50 mm of rain. It was followed by Nakhatrana taluka in Kutch (33 mm), Wadhwan taluka of Surendranagar (17 mm), Ahwa taluka of Dang (11 mm), Thangadh of Surendranagar (10 mm) and Waghai of Dang (8 mm), the SEOC said.

Light showers were recorded in parts of Junagadh, Rajkot and Amreli districts during the day, it added.

Poicha drowning: Two bodies recovered, 5 still missing

By Staff Reporter

Ahmedabad, A day after seven residents of Surat out on a picnic were feared drowned in the Narmada river at Poicha, the joint search and rescue operation by the district fire department and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) retrieved two bodies on Wednesday. The 6BN NDRF from Vadodara rushed a second team to assist in the operations at Poicha, 24 hours after the incident. Along with three teams of the Narmada fire department, the rescuers managed to

pull out the bodies of Bhavesh Hadiya and Bhargav, both aged 15. While Bhavesh's body was recovered about 4 km from the spot where the group had drowned, Bhargav was away from the depth of the river. A spokesperson of NDRF told The Indian Express that the search operation was challenging, as the river is infested with crocodiles and the current in its depths were strong. "While this is not a full-flowing river due to summer, the deep parts have strong currents that are posing a challenge.

BSc, BBA dropouts, who took to chain snatching to earn easy money and lead lavish lifestyle, held in Vadodara

By Staff Reporter

Ahmedabad, The Vadodara Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) on Tuesday caught two hardened criminals with over 20 cases of theft and chain snatching registered against them across several police stations of Gujarat.

The police said the lure of easy money for trips to Goa and a "loyal partnership" turned two dropouts into criminals.

The two accused, aged 29, were caught in five fresh cases of theft of two-wheelers and chain snatching registered against them at Akota, Panigate and Sama police

stations. According to the Vadodara DCB, the two accused, Vaibhav Jadhav and Bhavin Chandpa, became "thick friends" as roommates when they were studying at a Junagadh college in 2014. Jadhav, a native of Junagadh, was pursuing B.Sc and Chandpa was pursuing BBA.

In the last 15 days, the accused committed two thefts of two-wheelers in the jurisdiction of Akota and Panigate police stations, which were used to commit three chain snatchings in the jurisdiction of Sama police station. On Wednesday, Harpalsinh Rathod, Assis-

tant Commissioner of Police, DCB, said, "We had a tip-off that the two accused were arriving in Vadodara to commit theft."

Rathod added, "Since hard work brings in money slowly, they resorted to chain snatching and two-wheeler thefts to make easy money that they would spend on their expenditures." Crime Branch Police Inspector Ravirajsinh Jadeja said that the two accused hailed from middle-class families but had decided to discontinue their education and resort to thefts to "have easy income" instead of looking for employment.

Fake NOCs for organ transplant: Additional Superintendent of SMS Hospital suspended

Jaipur, May 15 (IANS) The Additional Superintendent of SMS Hospital in Jaipur, Rajendra Bagri, was suspended from his post on Wednesday for his alleged involvement in the issuance of fake NOCs for organ transplants.

A notice under Rule 16 of the CCA has also been issued to Bagri, former Superintendent of SMS Hospital Achal Sharma, and former principal of SMS Medical College Rajeev Bagrahatta. Additional Chief Secretary in the Medical and Health Department, Shubhra Singh, said that Bagdi, a senior professor of general surgery at SMH Hospital, has been suspended with immediate effect after the investigation report in the matter showed him as guilty. The report claimed that Bagdi was fully aware

of receiving the NOC applications, and was primarily responsible for the meetings that were not organised.

Similarly, based on the report of the inquiry committee, a notice was issued under Rule 16 of CCA to Rajeev Bagrahatta and Achal Sharma for not organising a meeting to issue NOCs and for supervisory negligence.

Clarification has been sought from them within the next three days.

Both Bagrahatta and Sharma, who were found prima facie guilty for not holding meetings of the State Authorisation Committee to obtain NOC regularly, have already been removed from their posts.

Addressing a press conference earlier on Wednesday, Rajasthan Health Minister Gajendra

Singh Khimsar said, "The Medical and Health Department had constituted a high-level investigation committee after the fake NOC matter came to light, which submitted its report on Wednesday."

"Many important facts have come to our notice during the investigation. Human organ transplants were done at 15 hospitals in the state, including four government and 11 private hospitals. After the case of fake NOC came to light, the government collected the records of all the hospitals for investigation."

Shubhra Singh said the investigation revealed that about 945 organ transplants were reported in the past one year. Of these, 82 were performed at government hospitals and the remaining 863 at private hospitals.

INDIA bloc will form next govt at Centre, TMC to support it from outside: Bengal CM Mamata

By Staff Reporter

Ahmedabad, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday claimed that the INDIA bloc would form the government at the Centre after the Lok Sabha elections end and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) will support it from the outside.

Addressing a rally in support of TMC's Hooghly candidate Rachna Banerjee in Chinsura, Mamata said, "The BJP will lose in the first four phases of the polls. There is no chance of it winning in the remaining three. They will make a lot of noise, but they will not

be able to win. Many people are making big calculations. I am talking about Delhi. We will provide leadership to the INDIA alliance, and help them in every way from outside... So that my mother and sisters in Bengal don't face any difficulties, so that the beneficiaries of the 100 Days' work scheme do not face any difficulties." Along with the TMC, the Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) are among the Opposition parties that form the INDIA bloc. While the Congress and the CPI(M) are contesting the Lok Sabha polls together, the TMC had earlier announced that it would go it alone in the state. In the 42 Lok Sabha seats in Bengal,

the Congress has fielded candidates in 12 constituencies and the CPI(M) in the rest. "Don't count the Bengal Congress and CPI(M); those two are not with us. Those two are with the BJP," the TMC supremo added. Mamata also hit out at the Election Commission of India (EC) and said the poll panel was a "puppet" working under the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The EC is a puppet and operates according to Modi's directions. Polls are being conducted for two-and-half months, have you (poll officials) ever realised the struggle of the common people?" she asked.

We will not make any attempts to destabilise Cong govt but can't sit idly if it falls on its own: K'taka BJP leader

Bengaluru, May 16 (IANS) Karnataka BJP General Secretary V. Sunil Kumar has said that his party will not be making any attempts to destabilise the Congress government in the state and will only come into the picture only when the government falls on its own. Kumar made the remarks on Wednesday reacting to developments surrounding Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's statement that the Congress government in Karnataka will collapse after the Lok Sabha election results. "Many legislators are speaking against CM Siddaramaiah. Congress

MLAs are openly claiming that Deputy CM D.K. Shivakumar should become the CM. Let us see how the government will collapse. We will wait and see whether it will collapse due to CM Siddaramaiah or Deputy CM Shivakumar," he said. "Should we sit idly if the Congress government collapses on its own? We can't remain passive in that situation as an opposition party," Kumar said. The BJP MLA claimed that the Congress government has achieved no development even as it completes one year in power. "The entire cabinet is inefficient. The CM is governing without having a hold on cabi-

net ministers. The Home Minister is ineffective in ensuring law and order in the state. Brand Bengaluru has lost its significance," he added. Kumar further said that the BJP will initiate large-scale protests against the Congress government. "The inefficient governance has led to a situation where government employees are not receiving salaries every month. Governance in Karnataka is being dominated by members of a family and event management company," he said.

From lassis to ice creams, Mango is the flavor for India on Amazon Fresh

Bengaluru, Rising temperatures across India have led to a rise in demand for the summer season's favourite, Mangoes. Amazon Fresh recently launched the Mango Store ensuring best quality fruit is delivered right to your doorstep. With over 20+ varieties of mangoes available on Amazon Fresh, customers across India enjoyed Banganapalli mangoes the most. The other popular mango varieties this season are Ratnagiri Alphonso, Sindhura, Totapuri, and Kesar. To ensure the quality of the fruit, health, and safety, all mangoes on Amazon Fresh are carbide-free, safely ripened, and subjected to a stringent 4-step quality check process before they reach the customers. Srikant Sree Ram, Director, Amazon Fresh IN said, "This summer, we have seen a significant surge in demand for mangoes, ice creams and dairy products on Amazon Fresh. We witnessed over 30% growth in Mango flavored ice creams, Mango based dairy beverages (lassi, yogurt, shakes) and 43% year-on-year increase in units sold ice creams and Dairy Beverages categories. Moreover, our customer base expanded with a 20% rise in ice cream shoppers and a 33% surge in those purchasing dairy and dairy alternative beverages. To meet the diverse preferences of our customers, we curated a comprehensive selection of products, ranging from frozen desserts to premium natural fruit-based ice creams and healthier alternatives, including sugar-free, vegan, and low-calorie options, catering to evolving consumer demands.

'Bomb' scribbled on tissue paper found on Air India plane at Delhi airport

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) A tissue paper, with the word "bomb" written on it, was found in the Air India flight lavatory at Delhi airport, prompting security agencies to conduct an inspection but it turned out to be a hoax, a police official said.

Sharing the details, police said that on Wednesday at around 7:30 p.m., information was received regarding a tissue paper found in the lavatory of an Air India flight scheduled to depart for Vadodara, with the word "bomb" written on it.

"Following standard security protocols, a thorough inspection was conducted by Deputy Commissioner of Police (IGI Airport) Usha Rangnani.

LS polls: PM Modi to address four public meetings in UP today

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address a series of public meetings in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday.

The Prime Minister will hold public meetings in Laganj (Azamgarh) at 11:00 a.m., Jaunpur at 12:30 p.m., Bhadohi at 2:00 p.m., and Pratappgarh at 3:45 p.m.

Major political developments that will unfold across the country on Thursday:

* BJP President J.P. Nadda will campaign in Odisha on Thursday. The BJP chief will hold a roadshow in Bhubaneswar at around 10:00 a.m. After the roadshow, he will visit the Lingaraj Temple in the city at 11:10 a.m. From there, he will proceed to Padampur in Barghar dis-

trict to hold a public meeting at 2:05 p.m. followed by another rally in Sundargarh at 4:15 p.m.

* Union Home Minister Amit Shah will on Thursday hold public meetings in Bihar's Sitamarhi at 12:30 p.m. and Bisfi (Madhubani) at 2:00 p.m. The Home Minister is also scheduled to visit J&K's Srinagar on Thursday, where he will meet members of civil societies and local BJP leaders. His visit to Srinagar comes at a time when Lok Sabha elections are underway across the country. However, the BJP has not fielded any candidates from the three seats in the Kashmir Valley.

* Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi will campaign for his son Rahul Gandhi

in Raebareilly on Thursday. * Rajya Sabha MP Imran Pratappgarhi will address a public meeting at 5 p.m. on Thursday in Raebareilly.

* Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will address public meetings in Manjhanpur (Kaushambi) at 1:05 p.m., Banda at 2:20 p.m., and Fatehpur at 3:25 p.m. on Thursday.

* Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav and AAP Convener Arvind Kejriwal will hold a joint press conference for the INDIA bloc in Lucknow on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. Later in the day, the Samajwadi Party chief will address election rallies in Atarra (Banda) at 12:40 p.m., Fatehpur at 2:00 p.m., and Sirathu (Kaushambi) at 3:10 p.m.

Israel attacks Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon

Tel Aviv, May 16 (IANS) Israel has carried out airstrikes in northeastern Lebanon's Baalbek, considered a stronghold of the Hezbollah group.

The area is around 100 km from the Israeli border. The airstrike was in retaliation to the Hezbollah attack in northern Israel on Wednesday late night and Thursday early morning hours. However, the IDF did not reveal whether there were any casualties in the attack.

According to the media reports, multiple targets were hit in the Nabi Chit and Brital areas in the Baalbek area. This is considered the largest attack of the Israeli Army into the Baalbek area.

The Hezbollah had claimed that it had

launched Kamikaze drones towards an IDF base in Tiberias in northern Israel. Sources in Israel's defence ministry said that a drone had exploded in Golan junction causing damages but without any casualties.

The Hezbollah had in a statement on Wednesday late night said that it had struck within Israel as a retaliation to the assassinations carried out by Israel. A top Hezbollah commander Hussain Mekki was killed by the IDF drone attack in southern Lebanon on Tuesday. Mekki, according to Israel, was responsible for attacks on Israeli civilians since the ongoing war against Hamas commenced on October 7, 2023.



Omar Bin Omran vanished during the decade-long Algerian civil war of 1998, leading his family to assume that he was killed in the conflict. However, he was found amid haystacks on May 12 (pictured left) - now aged 45 - only about 200 yards away from his family's home in the city of Djelfa after the captor's brother aired grievances on social media, reportedly due to an inheritance dispute. The alleged culprit, a 61-year-old doorman at the municipality in the nearby town of El Guedid, was taken into custody after attempting to flee, the ministry said. Pictured right: Omran is seen as a younger man before he was kidnapped.

'Cowardly, dastardly act', says PM Modi on attack on Slovak PM Robert Fico

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday condemned the attack on Slovakia's PM Robert Fico, calling it a "cowardly and dastardly act".

The Slovakian Prime Minister was critically injured in an assassination attempt on Wednesday.

Expressing shock over the attack, PM Modi posted on his X handle, "Deeply shocked at the news of the shooting at Slovakia's Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Robert Fico. I strongly condemn this cowardly and dastardly act and wish PM Fico a speedy recovery. India stands in solidarity with the people of the Slovak Republic."

According to local media, the Slovak Prime Minister is no longer in a life-threatening condition after surgery.

The attack has been classified as a politically motivated assassination attempt, according to Slovak Interior Minister Matus Sutaj Estok.

Estok said that the assassination attempt was "politically motivated and the decision was born right

after the presidential election". He blamed "social media hate" for the attack.

Fico was wounded Wednesday afternoon after attending a government meeting in the town of Handlova, some 150 km northeast of the capital. He was shot by a 71-year-old man. According to eyewitnesses, the man shot the premier several times as he was greeting supporters.

Several wounded in Switzerland knife attack

Geneva, May 16 (IANS) Several passers-by were injured in an indiscriminate knife attack in the northern Swiss town of Zofingen, according to the local police.

Police said on social media on Wednesday evening that the perpetrator had been apprehended by special forces after hiding in a building for two hours. The victims had been transported to the hospital with stab wounds, Xinhua news agency quoted police as saying.

Ireland will recognise Palestinian statehood this month: Deputy Prime Minister

Dublin, May 15 (IANS/DPA) Ireland will recognise Palestinian statehood by the end of the month, the Irish Deputy Prime Minister said on Wednesday. Ireland and Spain have been in discussions with other European countries about making a joint recognition of the state of Palestine.

While May 21 had been floated as a potential date, Irish Deputy Prime Minister Micheal Martin said the specific day remains "fluid". Martin said: "We will be recognising the state of Palestine before the end of the month."

"The specific date is still fluid because we're still in discussions with some countries in respect of a joint recognition of a Palestinian state."

"It will become clear in the next few days as to the specific date, but it certainly will be before the end of this month, and I look forward to consultations today with some foreign ministers in respect of the final specific detail of this."

Speaking on Newstalk radio, he added: "We're doing it in the context of the Arab Peace Initiative to track towards a two-state solution and to extend the signal to the Palestinian population at large that we support their right to self-determination and the idea of a two-state solution as the ultimate, only way that Israelis and Palestinians can live side-by-side in peace." Asked if he supported a call to fly the Palestinian flag over the Irish parliament, Martin said: "What is important here is we focus on the substantive issues of an immediate ceasefire."

"It is quite shocking that Israel is moving into Rafah, and there is now a military operation underway in Rafah." "The suffering is immense. The death and destruction is immense, and people want it to stop, and the international community want it to stop."

Senior Hezbollah leader killed in Lebanon airstrike: Israel

Tel Aviv/Beirut, May 15 (IANS/DPA) The Israeli army says it has killed a senior commander of the Hezbollah militia in an airstrike in southern Lebanon on Tuesday evening.

The pro-Iranian militia confirmed the death of one of its fighters without naming the rank.

According to the Israeli military on Wednesday morning, the man is said to have been responsible for planning and carrying out numerous attacks against Is-

raeli civilians and Israeli territory.

Lebanon's state news agency NNA reported that a car had been hit in an Israeli drone attack on Tuesday evening. Two people were killed in the attack.

Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, there have been daily military confrontations between Israel's army and the Hezbollah militia and other groups in the border area between Israel and Lebanon.



The pro-Putin prime minister of Slovakia was recovering in hospital last night after being shot in an assassination bid that triggered alarm bells across Europe. Robert Fico was beckoned over to meet a crowd of supporters before a gunman leaned across and fired five times at point-blank range, sending the divisive politician sprawling to the ground. Bodyguards pounced on the would-be assassin as Mr Fico was carried into a government limousine which sped away before he was airlifted to hospital. His condition was critical, however Slovak deputy prime minister Tomas Taraba told the BBC that 'the operation went well', adding he was confident that 'he will survive'. As police said they had detained 71-year-old poet Juraj Cintula on suspicion of the shooting in Handlova, central Slovakia.

Almost 4,50,000 people fled Rafah fighting in a week: UN

Gaza/Tel Aviv, May 16 (IANS/DPA) Almost 4,50,000 people left the city of Rafah in Gaza in the space of one week as hordes of displaced people try to escape from heavy fighting in the south of the coastal strip, the UN said on Tuesday.

"Empty streets in Rafah as families continue to flee in search of safety," the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) wrote on X.

"People face constant exhaustion, hunger and fear. Nowhere is safe. An immediate ceasefire is the only hope."

The Israeli army advanced on Gaza's southernmost city from the east just over a week ago and has since also taken control of the Palestinian part of the Rafah border crossing to Egypt.

Israel is exerting military pressure on the Palestinian militant organisation Hamas to secure the release of hostages taken

at the start of the Gaza war last October. It also wants to dismantle any remaining Hamas battalions in Gaza. Israeli attacks and fighting in the Gaza Strip continued on Tuesday, with Palestinian eyewitnesses reporting continuous shelling in the north, south and centre of the coastal strip. The military wing of Hamas reported that it had repeatedly attacked Israeli troops at the Rafah crossing and hit a troop carrier near the city.

Egypt may curb relations with Israel over Gaza war

Cairo, May 16 (IANS/DPA) Egypt may downgrade its diplomatic ties with neighbouring Israel in response to Tel Aviv's extensive military action in the Gaza Strip, US media reported on Tuesday.

According to the Wall Street Journal, unnamed Egyptian government officials indicated that one consequence of the Gaza operations could be the

withdrawal of the Egyptian ambassador from Israel.

However, there are currently no plans to break off relations completely, the report added. There was initially no official comment from Cairo.

Now in its eighth month, the Gaza war is putting the relationship between the two countries to the test.

The government in Cairo is concerned that a large number of Palestinians could cross the border into Egypt if the Israeli offensive in Rafah in the southern part of Gaza is extended.

Egypt was the first Arab country to make peace with Israel in 1979. The country also supports Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip.

In a sign of growing

Children with severe obesity at age 4 may have a life expectancy of just 39: Study

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) A child living with severe obesity at age four and doesn't lose weight may have a life expectancy of just 39 -- about half of the average life expectancy, finds a study on Wednesday.

This "profound effect" of obesity, however, could be curbed by losing weight, the study showed.

The study, presented at the European Congress on Obesity (ECO) in Venice, Italy, for the first time, quantified the impact of age of onset, severity, and duration of childhood obesity.

"The early onset obesity model shows that weight reduction has a striking effect on life expectancy and comorbidity

risk, especially when weight is lost early in life," Dr Urs Wiedemann of Stradoo GmbH, a life sciences consultancy in Munich, Germany.

"It is clear that childhood obesity should be considered a life-threatening disease. It is vital that treatment isn't put off until the development of Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure or other 'warning signs' but starts early," Dr Wiedemann said.

For the study, the researchers created an early-onset obesity model based on data from 50 existing clinical studies on obesity and obesity-related comorbidities, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular events, and fatty liver.

Top EU diplomat urges Israel to end military operation in Rafah

Brussels, May 15 (IANS/DPA) Top EU diplomat Josep Borrell urged Israel to "immediately" end its military operation in Rafah in a statement on Wednesday.

The EU foreign policy chief said the Israeli offensive in Gaza's southernmost city is disrupting deliveries of humanitarian aid and "leading to more internal displacement, exposure to famine and human suffering."

Borrell said the European Union called on Israel to "refrain from further exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza." He warned that continuing the assault will strain EU-Israel relations.

While the EU recognises Israel's right to defend itself, "Israel must do so in line with International Hu-

manitarian Law and provide safety to civilians," Borrell said.

Israel's allies, including its main backer, the United States, have been warning Israel for weeks

against a ground offensive into Rafah, where more than one million Palestinians had been sheltering from fighting elsewhere in the coastal strip.

The Israeli army advanced on Rafah from the east at the beginning of last week and has since also taken control of the

Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing to Egypt. On Tuesday, Israeli troops advanced deeper into central Rafah, according to eyewitnesses in the overcrowded city.

Borrell said the EU called for "all parties to redouble their efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire" and for the unconditional release of all hostages taken by Hamas during the October 7 attacks.

Around 1,200 people were killed and 250 others taken hostage in the unprecedented massacre by Hamas and other Islamist groups in Israel.

The terrorist attack triggered the Gaza war, and around 35,000 Palestinians have since been killed in Israeli airstrikes and fighting on the ground.

US partnerships with South Korea, Japan key to making prosperous, secure Indo-Pacific: Official

Seoul, May 16 (IANS) The US' bilateral and trilateral relationships with South Korea and Japan will help enhance prosperity and security for all parties in the Indo-Pacific, US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said on Tuesday.

Campbell made the remarks in a virtual speech, pointing out that such partnerships have never carried more significance than now as the world faces many opportunities and challenges at the same time, Yonhap news agency reported.

"Both alliances have transformed from primari-

ly security-focused relationships to truly comprehensive global partnerships, with impacts reverberating far beyond the Indo-Pacific," Campbell said in a pre-recorded keynote speech during a forum hosted by the Asian Institute for Policy Studies, a Seoul-based think tank.

Campbell cast the series of bilateral and trilateral summits the US has had with South Korea, Japan, and separately with Japan and the Philippines as a clear demonstration of the "not just historic but unrivalled" level of commitment from Washington and its allies in the Indo-

Pacific.

"As President Biden has made clear, our partners and allies are critical if we are to be successful in seizing these key opportunities and maintaining our readiness to confront the most pressing challenges of the 21st century," Campbell said.

Russian forces repel massive missile attack on Sevastopol: Governor

Moscow, May 16 (IANS) No casualties were reported in the area of Fedorovskaya Street of Sevastopol where a downed missile fell in a private sector, city Governor Mikhail Razvozhaev said in a telegram channel on Wednesday.

"Our military repelled a massive attack on Sevastopol. In the area of Fedor-

ovskaya Street, fragments of a downed missile fell in a private sector. Information about the victims is being clarified," Razvozhaev said, reports Xinhua news agency.

He further added that Russia's air defence forces have shot down several missiles over the water area and in the area of the Belbek airfield.



Erica Stoll cut a dejected figure as she left her Pilates class without the \$650,000 sparkler given to her by Rory McIlroy upon their engagement after news of their shock split. McIlroy, 35, is said to have filed for the split on Monday, just three days before the PGA Championship, the second major of the year, and fresh off his latest victory at the Wells Fargo Championship last weekend.

IPL 2024: Sam Curran's heroics hand Rajasthan their fourth consecutive defeat

Guwahati, May 15 (IANS) Punjab Kings (PBKS) defeated Rajasthan Royals (RR) by five wickets in the 65th game of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 at the Barsapara Stadium, here on Wednesday. PBKS chased down the modest total of 145 on the back of their captain Sam Curran, who excelled in pretty much all three departments on the field.

Avesh Khan's over saw some life bounce back into the Sanju Samson led side as the ex-Delhi fast bowler took the wickets of Rilee Rossouw and Shashank Singh in the sixth over of the second innings to drag the side back into the game.

Just when it seemed that Punjab were on the verge of a collapse, in came captain Sam Curran who scored a valiant half century and went on to win the game for his side. Curran and Jitesh Sharma's 63 run partnership added stability to their innings and put them in a favourable condition to win the game.

Juve beat Atalanta to clinch 15th Coppa Italia title

Rome, May 16 (IANS) Juventus avoided finishing another season without a trophy as they registered their 15th Coppa Italia title after beating Atalanta 1-0 in the final, thanks to Dusan Vlahovic's goal in the opening minutes.

Juve had won the tournament 14 times before with their last victory coming in 2021, while Atalanta only won the title once in the 1962-63 season.

The Bianconeri made a dream start just four minutes into the game when Andrea Cambiaso's through-ball reached Vlahovic, who resisted a shoulder-to-shoulder challenge to find the net.

Vlahovic had penalty appeal in the 54th minute when he went down in the box, but the referee waved play on, before another goal from the Serbian was wiped out due to offside.

Atalanta had the opportunity to equalize but Ademola Lookman saw his strike hit the woodwork in the 80th minute, while Juve's Fabio Miretti also had a shot onto the bar.

Ligue 1: Barcola leads PSG to 2-1 away win over Nice

Nice (France), May 16 (IANS) Bradley Barcola continued a strong run of recent form and helped Paris Saint-Germain to an away win against OGC Nice on Wednesday night.

Paris Saint-Germain rolled out 2-1 winners, denying hosts OGC Nice a chance at playing in the UEFA Champions League next season. Barcola with a goal and an assist leading the way for a heavily rotated side.

But, it was PSG who struck first though, as Barcola robbed Jordan Lotomba, exchanged passes with Fabian Ruiz and gave his side the lead just over fifteen minutes into the match. Minutes later, Barcola doubled the lead with a low cross turned in by Yoram Zague for the teenager's first goal in Ligue 1. Nice would pull a goal back, though as a mazy run by Jeremie Boga saw him lay the ball off for Mohamed-Ali Cho to make it 2-1 ten minutes before the break, Ligue 1 reports.



GET RID OF THEM!

Wayne Rooney has delivered a brutal verdict on Manchester United's squad, believing that most of them should be moved on by the club. United's all-time leading scorer was speaking after their 3-2 victory over Newcastle on Wednesday night. It was a positive result in their final match at Old Trafford this season, but it has been a bitterly disappointing season, with fans holding out hope they can end the campaign on a high by pulling off a massive upset against rivals Man City in the FA Cup final.

India football legend Sunil Chhetri to retire after India's match against Kuwait

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Indian football team captain Sunil Chhetri announced on Thursday that he will draw the curtain on his international career after the country's FIFA World Cup qualification match against Kuwait, scheduled for June 6.

The 39-year-old striker revealed his decision by sharing a video on his social media accounts.

"There is one day that I never forget and remember it quite often is the first time I played for my country man, it was unbelievable. But the day before, the morning of the day, Sukhi sir, my first national team coach, in the morning he came to me and he's like, you're going to start? I can't tell you how I was feeling man. I took my jersey, I sprayed some perfume on it, I have no idea why. So that day, everything that happened, once he told me, from breakfast to lunch and to the game and to my first goal in my debut, to conceding late 80th minute,

that day is probably that I will never forget and is one of the best days of my national team journey," Chhetri said in a video.

"The feeling I recollected in the last 19 years is a very nice combination of



duty, pressure and immense joy. I never thought, individually, these are the many games I have played for the country, this is what I have; good or bad, but now I do it. This last one and half or two months I did it... because probably I was towards the decision that this game will be my last.

"And the moment I told myself first, that yes, this is the game that is going to be my last, is when I started recollecting everything. It was so strange, I started thinking about this game, that game, this coach, that coach, that team, that member, that ground, that away match, this good game, that bad game, all my individual performances, everything came, all the flashes came. So when I did decide that this is it, this is going to be my last game, I told my mom, my dad and my wife, my family first, my dad.

"My dad was my dad, he was normal, he was relieved, happy, everything, but my mom and my wife straightly started crying and I told them, you always used to bug me that there are too many games, there is too much of pressure when you watch me and now that I'm telling you that, you know,

I'm not going to play for my country anymore after this game." And even they couldn't, they couldn't express to me as to why they, they burst into tears. It's not that I was feeling tired, it's not that I was feeling this or that, when the instinct came that this should be my last game, then I thought about it a lot and eventually I came to this decision," said Chhetri. The striker made his international debut against Pakistan on June 12, 2005. He has been part of the title-winning Indian teams in the AFC Challenge Cup in 2008, the SAFF Championship in 2011 and 2015, the Nehru Cup in 2007, 2009 and 2012, as well as the Intercontinental Cup in 2017 and 2018.

Moreover, Chhetri is the third in the list of most international goals with 94 in 150 matches behind Argentine star Lionel Messi (106 in 180 matches) and Portugal great Cristiano Ronaldo (128 in 205 matches).

Premier League: Chelsea beat Brighton to boost European hopes

Brighton (UK), May 16 (IANS) Chelsea maintained their European charge as they moved up to sixth in the Premier League table with a 2-1 win over Brighton & Hove Albion.

The win means Chelsea head into their final game of the season at home to Bournemouth on Sunday knowing victory would guarantee us European football next season.

Cole Palmer's 22nd Premier League goal of the season and his 27th in all competitions, plus a second from Christopher Nkunku helped the Blues move sixth, three points above Newcastle United and Manchester United in seventh and eighth respectively.

The game's opening goal arrived just after the half-hour mark when Palmer stooped low to head Cucurella's cross from the left beyond the diving Verbruggen and into the far, top corner. Chelsea might have had a second had it not been for an impressive block from Lewis Dunk as a slick move down the right saw Palmer side-foot Gusto's low cross goalwards, only

to be stopped by the England defender, Chelsea website reports. Chelsea thought the second had arrived in injury time when Benoit Badashile crossed expertly to the far post and the ball was nodded in from close range by Jackson, but the forward had just strayed into an offside position.

With nine minutes of injury-time, there was still time for Jackson to go close once more before the break when he toe-poked Palmer's low cross over the bar.

But the first-half action wasn't finished there, as another dangerous cross from Lamptey on the right picked out the head of Joao Pedro and he rattled the crossbar.

The game's next goal came in the 64th minute when Gusto drove inside the penalty area and pulled the ball across the box for Nkunku to direct the ball past Verbruggen.

Brighton piled on the pressure from there and Simon Adingra struck a post on the volley before a low cross from the left by Joao Pedro was poked home at the near post by Danny Welbeck.

Delhi High Court upholds NRAI's Olympic selection policy

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Delhi High Court, in an order pronounced on Thursday, has upheld the Paris 2024 Olympic Selection Policy formulated by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), the country's governing body for the sport shooting. A petition filed by a shooter challenging her non-inclusion to participate in the Olympic selection Trials was dismissed upholding the NRAI selection criteria/policy for the Paris 2024. Reacting to the developments, K Sultan Singh, secretary general, NRAI, said, "Our selection policy for the Olympic Games 2024 stands upheld being fair, reasonable and transparent. All the athletes have been given a fair chance. The policy is more inclusive for the shooters to qualify." The Indian shooting squad has bagged a record 21 Olympic quota places out of maximum of 24 Quotas for each nation for the upcoming Paris 2024 Games, scheduled to begin on July 26, 2024. Shotgun shooters have bagged their highest ever tally of five quota places. The squad will look to add to the tally of four Olympic medals (including one gold) that the sport has won so far in the marquee sporting event.



Business & Technology



Vogue Eyewear Unveils 'Keep Playing', An Effervescent Campaign With Taapsee Pannu

Mumbai, Vogue Eyewear, known for its versatile and fashionable eyewear, is thrilled to announce its latest campaign featuring talented actress and Brand Ambassador, Taapsee Pannu. This campaign encourages everyone to embrace every moment in life with a playful spirit.

In a world that constantly presents us with dynamic situations, Vogue Eyewear believes that it is our approach to life which truly matters and makes all the difference. The campaign, titled "Keep Playing," invites consumers to tap into their light, bright, and joyful side while engaging with life in all its colorful facets.

Commenting on the new campaign, Taapsee Pannu said, "I'm thrilled about my partnership with

Vogue Eyewear and to be a part of another campaign. The key message of "Keep Playing" resonates deeply with me, as it encourages everyone to express themselves freely and live life to the fullest while infusing each moment with fun and playfulness."

The concept of "playing" is brought out in the campaign in the form of everyday scenarios such as day dreaming, playing with fashion, dancing to your own tune, or choosing the unexpected, high-lighting delightful forms of engagement that enrich our lives in everyday situations.

"Vogue Eyewear continues to underline and celebrate self-expression. Our campaign, with the dynamic Taapsee Pannu, known for her uninhibited

free spirit and who perfectly encapsulates the essence of self-expression, encourages individuals to live life fashionably and unencumbered," said Gunjan Saigal, Brand Group Head - Luxury, Premium & Fast Fashion.

Commenting on the campaign Adrijaa Sanyal Creative Director at Brandmovers India said, "Our brand shines in the light of our consumers' self-revelation. We wish to convey them how it delights us to watch them embrace their individuality, in intense and playful moments, their reveries and even their smallest acts of defiance. With the very charismatic Taapsee Pannu as our ambassador, we hope this campaign will elevate the spirits and style alike wherever it reaches".

Generative AI service Amazon Bedrock Available in AWS Asia Pacific (Mumbai) Region

Bengaluru, Amazon Web Services (AWS), an Amazon.com company, announced at AWS Summit Bengaluru that Amazon Bedrock, which offers customers the easiest, fastest, and most secure way to build and scale generative artificial intelligence (AI) applications and experiences, is generally available in the AWS Asia Pacific (Mumbai) Region.

To help customers globally take advantage of this new technology, Amazon Bedrock became generally available to all customers worldwide through select regions in 2023. The general availability of Amazon Bedrock in AWS Asia Pacific (Mumbai) Region will support customers across the country, including public sector organisations and companies in regulated

industries, to innovate with generative AI and to have further choices on where they can run and store generative AI applications. Deploying generative AI workloads closer to end users will also help customers with low latency needs.

"We are excited about helping customers accelerate generative AI innovation across all industries with Amazon Bedrock. Take the financial services industry, for example, trading firms could supercharge their trading algorithms with generative AI to continually optimise trading strategies based on real-time portfolio performance and evolving market conditions.

Or in the healthcare industry, hospitals could use virtual care assistants to alleviate resource con-

straints by using conversational language capabilities to assist with patient queries," said V.G. Sundar Ram, Head of Business Development, AWS India and South Asia.

"AWS is committed to helping customers accelerate their generative AI journey from experimentation to production in an efficient and secure way. Our customers value choice; some prefer to build from scratch, while others prefer models tailored for specific use cases.

We want to provide organisations in India with the performant, cost-effective infrastructure they need to build with generative AI," said Shalini Kapoor, Chief Technologist-APJ Public Sector, Director-AWS India and South Asia.

MG Hector emerges as the best Value-for-Money SUV

Gurugram, The Hector, a flagship SUV of MG (Morris Garages), a British automobile brand with a 100-year-old legacy, which comes equipped with a host of attractive features while offering a comfortable ride is also the best value vehicle in the SUV segment. It has garnered top rankings for ownership costs among the popular hatchback cars and compact SUVs in the recent NielsenIQ Service Cost Survey. Additionally, Droom's recent analysis placed the Hector at the forefront for factors such as, resale value, fuel efficiency and customer satisfaction.

The NielsenIQ Service Cost Survey analysed SUVs and Hatchbacks purchased between Jan '21-Aug-'21 and completed average of 3-5 regular services. For petrol models, where MG Hector was ranked as the leading car in terms of affordable cost of ownership amongst all other vehicles surveyed including some major hatchbacks.

Commenting on this achievement, Satinder Singh Bajwa, Chief Commercial Officer, MG Motor India, "The MG Hector has carved a niche for itself among Indian SUV enthusiasts since its launch. It embodies a perfect blend of luxury, efficiency, a bold & iconic design packed with tech-led features offering a comfortable ride to its passengers. Beyond its impressive features, the Hector stands out for its low Total Cost of Ownership, high resale value, and superior quality that sets a benchmark in the industry."

Samsung Launches 3 New Refrigerators Featuring Next-Gen. AI Inverter Compressor

GURUGRAM, Samsung, India's largest consumer electronics brand, today announced the launch of three new refrigerators that ensure smarter living for Indian homes by helping consumers customise their choices. The new refrigerators feature Samsung's next generation Artificial Intelligence-powered Inverter Compressor. The AI Inverter Compressor, the heart of Samsung's new refrigerators, transforms the traditional internal design by optimizing motor and energy efficiency while saving electricity costs.

Samsung's eighth generation compressor brings AI to the fore - marking a revolutionary change from its first compressor introduced 27 years back. The AI Inverter Compressor comes with a segment-leading 20-year warranty, guaranteeing long-lasting performance and energy efficiency. The new AI refrigerators come in three models - the 809L 4-Door Flex French Door Bespoke Family Hub™ Refrigerator in Clean Charcoal + Stainless Steel colour, and the 650L 4-Door Convertible French Door models' in Clean White in glass finish and Black Caviar in steel finish.

"Samsung is entering a new era of home appliances with Bespoke AI, offering refrigerators featuring a high-efficiency AI Inverter Compressor that delivers exceptional performance. By utilizing the AI Energy Mode, consumers can achieve energy savings of up to 10%. Samsung remains committed to developing AI Inverter Compressors and associated technologies, ensuring that our refrigerators provide long-lasting reliability and reduced energy consumption," said Saurabh Baishakhia, Senior Director, Digital Appliances Business, Samsung India.

Lincoln Pharmaceuticals reports FY 2023-24 Net Profit of Rs. 93.37 cr

Ahmedabad, Lincoln Pharmaceuticals Limited, one of India's leading healthcare companies has achieved excellent operational and financial performance for the Q4 and FY 23-24 ended March 2024. Company has continued to better its profit margins and achieved the milestone of Profit Growth Every Single year from FY13 to FY24. With focused growth strategies and business expansion plans for value added products and expanding to newer markets, company is targeting revenue of Rs. 750 crore in FY26. As of March 2024, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) have also steadily raised their holding in the company to 3.93% from 1.27% as on March 2023.

Net profit of the company during FY24 reported a growth of 28.61% Yo-Y to Rs. 93.37 crore as against the net profit of Rs. 72.60 crore in FY23. Com-

pany reported EBITDA of Rs. 134.33 crore in FY24, rise of 20.28% as compared to EBITDA of Rs. 111.68 crore in FY23. Total Income during FY24 was reported at Rs. 614.97 crore, higher by 15.43% over previous fiscal's same period total income of Rs. 532.78 crore. EPS for FY24 was reported at Rs. 46.58 per share. Company has recommended a dividend of 18%, Rs. 1.80 per share on the face value of Rs. 10 per share for the FY 2023-24.

Mr. Mahendra Patel, Managing Director, Lincoln Pharmaceuticals Limited, said, "Lincoln has demonstrated remarkable consistency in its growth trajectory, achieving significant milestones year after year. From FY13 to FY24, the company has continuously improved its margins and achieved a commendable feat of consistent profit growth. In

FY24 alone, Lincoln maintained its momentum with strong growth across all business segments, culminating in a net profit of Rs. 93.37 crore and an EBITDA of Rs. 134.33 crore.

Looking ahead, Lincoln is poised to sustain and even accelerate its growth momentum. With plans for new product launches in both domestic and export markets, alongside strategic expansions into newer markets, the company aims to further solidify its market presence.

For Q4 ended FY24, company reported net profit of Rs. 18.88 crore as against net profit of Rs. 12.17 crore in the corresponding period last year, growth of 55.14%. Total Income for the Q4FY24 was reported at Rs. 149.51 crore, higher by 28.49% over previous fiscal's same period income of Rs. 116.36 crore.

Women's internet adoption on mobile phones reach 37 pc in India: GSMA

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) Women's internet adoption on mobile phones has reached 37 per cent in India, while adoption among men remains stable, narrowing the gender gap from 40 per cent to 30 per cent, a global report showed on Wednesday.

In 2023, an additional 120 million women connected to the internet via mobile globally.

More women in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) are using mobile internet than ever before.

1.5 billion (66 per cent) in total, according to the report by the GSMA, a global organisation that represents mobile network operators worldwide. However, an alarming 785 million women remain unconnected, with approximately 60 per cent in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, said the annual 'Mobile Gender Gap

Report 2024' by the GSMA.

Claire Sibthorpe, Head of Digital Inclusion at the GSMA, said that the reduction in the mobile internet gender gap is promising but "sustaining momentum is fragile".

"We are collaborating with the industry, policymakers and other relevant partners to address key barriers including affordability, awareness and digital skills," Sibthorpe added.

The GSMA estimates that closing the gender gap in mobile ownership and usage across LMICs could deliver an additional \$230 billion in revenue to the mobile industry over an eight-year period.

The gender gap in mobile internet adoption across LMICs has narrowed for the first time since 2020, driven by women adopting it at a faster rate than men, particularly in South Asia.

X to make live content more engaging, reach more users: Musk

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Tesla CEO Elon Musk on Thursday said the X platform will soon launch more features to make live content more engaging and reach a wider audience.

When X senior security engineer Nathan McGrady asked what is the worst thing about live content on the platform, a user replied: "Discoverability." "It's not being pushed by the algorithm. There's no dedicated live content tab," said the X user.

He further said that people viewing the live content are completely dependent on the performance of a tweet. Another Musk follower suggested that he would love to see being able to go live with a group of users, like "host a panel discussion or debate, like StreamYard and other tools". --IANS

ONGC, Oil India to get relief as Centre cuts windfall tax on crude oil

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) The Central government has cut the windfall tax on petroleum crude to 5,700 rupees (\$68.34) per metric ton from 8,400 rupees with effect from Thursday, as part of its fortnightly revision that is calibrated with global prices.

Upstream oil exploration and production companies ONGC and Oil India Ltd will gain as they will have to pay a lower tax on their crude oil output.

The tax has been scaled down as crude oil prices have declined in the international market and the earnings of oil produc-

ers have also come down. Prices of the benchmark Brent crude are currently hovering at a little over \$82 per barrel.

The government had on April 16 raised the windfall tax on petroleum crude to Rs 9,600 a metric ton from Rs 6,800 due to the sharp increase in oil prices at the time.

The windfall tax on crude was introduced for the first time in July last year as a sudden spike in prices had increased the earnings of the oil companies and the government wanted to tap part of this gain to reduce the fiscal deficit.

Adani Energy Solutions acquires Essar's Mahan-Sipat transmission assets for Rs 1,900 crore

Ahmedabad, May 16 (IANS) Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL), on Thursday, announced that it has acquired 100 per cent stake in Essar Transco Ltd for Rs 1,900 crore.

The acquisition covers a fully operational 400 kV, 673 ckt kms (circuit kilometres) inter-state transmission line, linking Mahan in Madhya Pradesh to Sipat pooling substation in Chhattisgarh.

"The acquisition of Mahan-Sipat transmission network will consolidate AESL's presence in central India with four operat-

ing assets having 3,373 ckt km in the region," the company said in a statement.

The acquisition, through AESL's wholly-owned subsidiary Adani Transmission Step-Two Limited (ATSTL), is consistent with the company's philosophy of augmenting its existing capacities and bringing in efficiency through operational synergies and creating network effect.

"Along with a robust energy demand, the ability to recognise and tap market opportunities within the areas of interest

continues to propel and position AESL at the forefront of energy transition in India," the company said.

The acquisition takes the cumulative network of AESL to more than 21,000 ckt kms.

For the acquisition, ATSTL also raised financing at the most competitive terms.

"This establishes a new benchmark for AESL to raise capital and unlocks the lower cost debt for its operational assets," said the company.

AESL is the country's largest private transmission company, with a pres-

ence across 17 states with 57,011 MVA transformation capacity.

It serves more than 12 million consumers in metropolitan Mumbai and the industrial hub of Mundra SEZ.

AESL clocked operational revenue at Rs 14,217 crore for the year ended March 31, up 17 per cent (year-on-year) -- registering comparable profit after tax (PAT) at Rs 1,197 crore, up by 12 per cent.

Operational EBITDA was at Rs 5,695 crore for the full year, up 7 per cent YoY.

Amazon faces 2 lawsuits in US over 'dark patterns' as India prepares guidelines

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) As the Indian government aims to curb the use of 'dark patterns' on e-commerce platforms, the US state of Arizona has filed two new lawsuits against Amazon, accusing the e-tailing giant of deceiving consumers with "dark patterns."

One of the lawsuits accuses the company of "engaging in deceptive business practices" by allegedly using "design tricks known as dark patterns to keep users from cancelling their Amazon Prime subscriptions."

The other lawsuit, filed by Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes, accuses Amazon of "unfairly main-

taining monopoly status by enforcing agreements with third-party sellers that restrict them from offering lower prices off of the platform than they do on Amazon," The Verge reported on Thursday.

The US state of Arizona has asked the court to stop Amazon from "engaging in the allegedly deceptive and anticompetitive practices" and "award civil penalties and disgorgement of ill-gotten gains."

Amazon said in a statement that it was "surprised and disappointed by these cases."

The company also defended Prime's sign-up and cancellation processes, saying these are "clear

and simple by design," adding that the lawsuits would actually force it to "feature higher prices."

The use of "dark patterns" by online platforms have created controversy in India as well.

These deceptive techniques mislead people into doing something they did not wish to do, such as paying for items or services they did not intend to buy. The Indian government recently released draft guidelines to curb "dark patterns" used by big online platforms.

The Digital India Act is also equipped to regulate "dark patterns" on the internet through user safety provisions.

India 'sees' its third unicorn of 2024 in logistics services platform Porter

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Homegrown logistics services platform Porter has likely become the third unicorn (with valuation of \$1 billion and above) in India this year after a fresh internal round.

According to sources, the fresh round involved key individual investors who bought stock from the employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) pool of the logistics provider, taking its valuation at \$1 billion.

The company told IANS in a statement: "We do not comment on market speculation as a company policy."

Before Porter, India

saw the birth of two unicorns -- Ola's Krutrim AI and fintech firm Perfios -- this year amid global slowdown.

Top investors like Tiger

Global, Peak XV Partners, Lightrock and the Mahindra Group have infused money in Porter.

Founded in 2014 by Pranav Goel, Uttam Diga and Vikas Choudhary, Porter launched an on-de-

mand marketplace for trucks, bikes and packers & movers.

It is one of the leading logistics companies, providing a spectrum of intra-city and inter-city services.

Bengaluru-based company saw its operating revenue crossed Rs 1,700 crore in FY23. Its FY24 results are yet to be announced.

The company generates revenue by offering services for transportation of goods. It has secured about \$150 million in funding to date. In the first quarter this year, the Indian tech startup ecosystem received more than \$1.6 billion in total funding.

Global capability centres' share in Indian IT exports reaches 23 pc: Report

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) The global capability centre (GCC) market is growing in India and the overall share of GCCs in total IT exports from India increased from 18 per cent in 2015 to 23 per cent last year, a report showed on Thursday.

India has 1,500-1,600 global GCCs which are offshore units established by multinational companies to perform a range of strategic functions.

According to HSBC Global Research, the revenue of GCCs has been growing at a CAGR of 11 per cent since 2015 compared to 8 per cent for top five Indian IT companies.

The report stated that GCCs' cost/head (including salary cost and overheads) is 30-40 per cent higher than that of internet service providers (ISPs) on average.

"This is due to an in-

ferior pyramid and higher like-for-like salaries at most levels. However, as ISPs have a significant offshore markup (pricing over costs), GCCs' cost/head is 20-25 per cent cheaper than the billing rate of ISPs," the findings showed.

According to Deloitte, nearly 5,000 global leadership roles are currently in GCCs in India.

For mature GCCs in the banking space, said

the HSBC report, nearly 30-40 per cent of their global tech and operations staff are in India now and "we believe this is a stable state."

So, some migration may continue over the next 1-2 years, though beyond that as costs per head escalate and GCCs' pyramid structure bloats, "there could be some value migration back to ISPs", the report mentioned.

Mahindra & Mahindra to invest Rs 12,000 crore in its EV unit

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Automaker Mahindra & Mahindra, on Thursday, announced to invest Rs 12,000 crore in its electric vehicle (EV) unit over a period of three years. In a stock exchange filing, the company said that it has approved an investment of Rs 12,000 crore in Mahindra Electric Automobile Limited (MEAL) to fund its EV journey over the next three years. "MM and its auto division expect to generate sufficient operating cash to satisfy all our capital investment needs and are not looking to raise additional capital," said the company. Further, M&M and British International Investments (BII) agreed to extend the timeframe for the final tranche of the latter's planned investment of Rs 725 crore.

Chinese marketplace Temu under scanner for breaching EU's Digital Services Act

London, May 16 (IANS) The European consumer organisation on Thursday filed a complaint against Chinese online marketplace Temu for failing to protect consumers by breaching the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA). BEUC, which represents 45 regional consumer protection groups across 31 EU countries, called for the EU to designate Temu as a "very large online platform" (VLOP) under the DSA. The VLOP status means that the Chinese platform has to com-

ply with additional transparency and accountability rules, like Alibaba, Amazon, Booking.com and Google Shopping which are among other VLOPs. "Our expectation is for the European Commission to move swiftly and force Temu to comply with its new obligations as a VLOP, including assessing and mitigating risks to consumers," said the consumer organisation. Among the breaches BEUC has identified, Temu is failing to provide sufficient traceability of the traders that sell on its platform and, thereby, "to ensure that the products sold to EU consumers conform to EU law".

PhonePe wins trademark infringement dispute

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) PhonePe has filed a suit for infringement of its trademarks i.e. "PhonePe" against M/S Aniket Foods before the Calcutta High Court for illegal use of PhonePe trademarks. The High Court in its order dated April 10, 2024 granted an ex-parte injunction in favour of PhonePe, restraining M/S Aniket Foods (including its agents, successors, stockists, distributors, dealers or anyone claiming through or under from using the infringed goods) from manufacturing and selling (in any manner whatsoever) and

also appointed Special Officer of the Court to visit the premises of M/S Aniket Foods wherein the illegal manufacturing of the infringed goods is taking place and to take inventories the available stocks.

CHANGE OF NAME
I have changed my old name from **KARAMCHANDANI ANUSHKA AKA MALABEN DEEPAK** to new name **ANUSHKA DEEPAKKUMAR KARAMCHANDANI**
Add. B/2/102, Green Acres Auda Lake Prahladnagar Ahmedabad-380015
551A

CHANGE OF NAME
I have changed my old name from **SUBHASHCHANDRA JAIN** to new name **SUBHASHCHAND JAIN**
Add. G-3, KUNTHUNATH SOC, NARAYANNAGAR ROAD, PALDI, AHMEDABAD M059A

CHANGE OF NAME
I have changed my old name from **ANUSHKA DEEPAK KARAMCHANDANI** to new name **ANUSHKA DEEPAKKUMAR KARAMCHANDANI**
Add. B/2/102, Green Acres Auda Lake Prahladnagar Ahmedabad-380015
551B

CHANGE OF NAME
I have changed my old name from **CHAAUHAN INDRASINH DEVISANG** to new name **GOHIL INDRASINH DEVISANG**
Add. Village: Kolat Sanand Ahmedabad
552

CHANGE OF NAME
I have changed my old name from **HUSSAIN BURHANUDDIN TINWALA** to new name **HUSAIN BURHANUDDIN TINWALA**
Add. 2370, Moti Makeriwad, Nava Darwaja Rd, Kalupur Ahmedabad-380001
551D

CHANGE OF NAME
I have changed my old name from **BALWANTSINH DHIRUBHAI PARMAR** to new name **BALWANTSINH DHIRUBHAI PARMAR**
Add. C/31, MANGALMURTI ROW HOUSE, GHODASAR, AHMEDABAD M059

CHANGE OF NAME
I have changed my minor daughters old name from **KRISHA DEEPAK KARAMCHANDANI** to new name **KRISHA DEEPAKKUMAR KARAMCHANDANI**
Add. B/2/102, Green Acres Auda Lake Prahladnagar Ahmedabad-380015
551

CHANGE OF NAME
I have changed my old name from **DEEPAK DWARKADAS KARAMCHANDANI** to new name **DEEPAKKUMAR DWARKAS KARAMCHANDANI**
Add. B/2/102, Green Acres Auda Lake Prahladnagar Ahmedabad-380015
551C

WESTERN RAILWAY - AHMEDABAD (SURVEY & CONSTRUCTION) CONSTRUCTION OF 2 LANE ROB
Deputy Chief Engineer (Construction)- II, Western Railway, Ahmedabad for and on behalf of President of Union of India invites e-Tender for following work:
1. Name of work: Construction of 2 lane Road Over Bridges (ROB) with approaches (End to End) in lieu of LC No. 257 at Km. 426/18-20 between Vaodara Gerapur of Vaodara Division. (TWO PACKET) 2. Approx. cost of work: ₹ 27,98,55,756.16
3. Earnest money to be deposited: ₹ 15,49,300
4. Tender form fees: Nil
5. Completion period of work: 15(Fifteen) months including monsoon
6. Date and submission of bid: 04/06/2024 at 15:00 Hrs.
7. Website particulars Notice Board location where complete details of tender can be seen & address of the office Website: www.reps.gov.in
Office of Dy.Chief Engineer (Construction) II, Western Railway, 2nd Floor, 'C' Wing, Nirman Bhavan, Near DRM Office, Asava, Ahmedabad-382345
Like us on: facebook.com/WesternRly

WESTERN RAILWAY - BHAVNAGAR DIVISION ENGINEERING WORKS
1.E-Tender No: 18/2024-25-R1 Name of Work: Bhavnagar division: Certification of land plans, superimposition with survey numbers and recasting missing land plan against the sanctioned work of Bhavnagar Division Tender Value: ₹ 79,47,558.08
E-MD: ₹ 1,59,000.00
2.E-Tender No: 19-2024-25-R Name of Work: Through Rail Renewal on various curve locations on condition basis in ADEN - Dhola section & Through Rail Renewal on account of defective welds in Bolad - Pipavav section on PRLC line under the jurisdiction of DEN/PRCL. Tender Value: ₹ 2,31,71,003.00
E-MD: ₹ 2,65,900.00
Bidding Start Date: 20/05/2024 Date of Bidding Closing: 04/06/2024. NIT dated: 10/05/2024 has been updated on Railway website www.reps.gov.in. BVP11
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This is to inform to the General Public at large that Panchal Miteshkumar Gunvantbhai & Panchal Mittalben Ashokbhai, R/o. At. Rampura, Po. Amodara, Ta. prantij, Dist. Sabarkantha joint owner occupant of Residential N.A. use land for Block/Survey No. 908/6, Plot No. 5 admeasuring about 156.00 sq. mtrs., situated within the revenue & Panchayat limits of Kanknol under Kanknol Gram Panchayat & revenue area Taluka: Himatnagar, Dist: Sabarkantha. (Collectively known as said property) Earlier relating to said property, one Regd. sale deed dtd. 04/10/2010 was executed by later owner Patel Shantilal Govindbhai in favour of Patel Popatbhai Vitthalbhai, which was regd. at Sr. No. 8950 before Sub Registrar, Himatnagar. During procedure of title report relating to said property, above Regd. sale deed in original was missing in chain of title and it was lost by Panchal Miteshkumar Gunvantbhai & Panchal Mittalben Ashokbhai within limits of Between Nikoda to Mahavnagar circle, Himatnagar and said my clients have made the best efforts to find out the said original sale deed, but despite of diligent / sufficient searches, it could not be traced and therefore for the lost of above sale deed, necessary complaint also filed before Himatnagar Relief Station. Any persons who ever has found the said above original Regd. sale deed bearing Registration No. 8950, Dtd. 4/10/2010 and / or any person, having any right / title, claim, share / possession of into / upon the said property by way of sale, exchange, mortgage, let, maintenance, easement, trust, possession or otherwise of whatsoever nature are hereby required to make the same in writing along with the documentary evidences to the undersigned at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date of publication, failing which it shall be deemed to have been waived and given up and my clients shall proceed further without reference to such claims, if any received afterwards.
Date: 16/05/2024
Ta. Himatnagar
(Ilyias G. Mansuri) Advocate
5, sarav Complex, Nyay Mandir, Himatnagar, Ta. Himatnagar, Dist. Sabarkantha
Mo. No. 93289 37828

WESTERN RAILWAY - BHAVNAGAR DIVISION SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING, COMMISSIONING OF TELECOM ITEMS
The Divisional Railway, Manager (S&T), Western Railway, Bhavnagar invite e-tenders on behalf of President of India for the following works. Tender No : 07-2024 Supply, Installation, Testing, commissioning of Telecom items in connection with Manning of Unmanned Level Crossing No. 58, 67 and 124 on Khjadia-Veraval (MG) Section of Bhavnagar Division, Western Railway. Estimated Cost : ₹ 13,21,609.07/- (Rs. Thirteen Lacs Twenty-One Thousand Six Hundred Nine and Paise Seven only) The bidders have to apply on line through link i.e. www.reps.gov.in only for further detail please visit web site www.reps.gov.in Last date for on line apply 11/06/2024 up to 15.00 Hrs. BVP13
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WESTERN RAILWAY - BHAVNAGAR DIVISION PAINTING AND VARNISHING WORK
The Divisional Railway, Manager (S&T), Western Railway, Bhavnagar invite e-tenders on behalf of President of India for the following works. Tender No: 06-2024: Complete painting and varnishing work of signalling gears at stations and LC gates in PRLC section of Bhavnagar Division, Western Railway. Estimated Cost : ₹ 24,40,125.74/- (Rs. Twenty-Four Lakhs Forty Thousand One hundred twenty-five Rupees and Seventy-Four Paise only). The bidders have to apply on line through link i.e. www.reps.gov.in only for further detail please visit web site www.reps.gov.in. Last date for on line apply 10/06/2024 up to 15.00 Hrs. BVP12
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WESTERN RAILWAY MAINTENANCE WORK
Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway, Mumbai Central, Mumbai-400008, invites E-tender Notice No: BCT/24-25/36 dt. 14.05.2024. Work and location: Ukai Songhad-Jalgaon section: Maintenance to P-way for UP/DN line under SSE (Pway) Sindhkheda for a period of 01 year (2024-25) (Total 45.051 kms). Approx. cost of work: ₹ 2,76,09,967.50. EMD: ₹ 2,88,100/-. Date & time of submission: 11/06.2024 15:00 hrs. Date & time of opening: On 11.06.2024 at 15:30 hrs. For further details please visit our website www.reps.gov.in. 0148
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WESTERN RAILWAY - AHMEDABAD (SURVEY & CONSTRUCTION) CONSTRUCTION OF 2 LANE ROB
Deputy Chief Engineer (Construction)- II, Western Railway, Ahmedabad for and on behalf of President of Union of India invites e-Tender for following work:
E-Tender Notice No: T/14-Dy. CE/II/ADIROB-2570/(TWO PACKET) 1. Name of work with its location: Construction of 2 lane Road Over Bridges (ROB) with approaches (End to End) in lieu of LC No. 257 at Km. 426/18-20 between Vaodara Gerapur of Vaodara Division. (TWO PACKET) 2. Approx. cost of work: ₹ 27,98,55,756.16
3. Earnest money to be deposited: ₹ 15,49,300
4. Tender form fees: Nil
5. Completion period of work: 15(Fifteen) months including monsoon
6. Date and submission of bid: 04/06/2024 at 15:00 Hrs.
7. Website particulars Notice Board location where complete details of tender can be seen & address of the office Website: www.reps.gov.in
Office of Dy.Chief Engineer (Construction) II, Western Railway, 2nd Floor, 'C' Wing, Nirman Bhavan, Near DRM Office, Asava, Ahmedabad-382345 Website: www.reps.gov.in CPM07
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Arrdektea Institute of Technology
Degree, Diploma & PG College
APPOINTMENT
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Principal	BE / DE / MBA / MCA			1	
	Degree Engg. & PG			Diploma Engg.	
BRANCH	Prof.	Asso. Prof.	Asst. Prof.	HOD	Lecturer
Mechanical Engg.	2	5	10	1	2
Electrical Engg.	2	5	10	1	3
Civil Engg.	2	5	10	1	3
Computer Engg.	1	3	6	1	3
I.T. Engg.	-	-	4	1	3
E & C Engg.	-	-	4	-	-
M.B.A.	-	-	6	-	-
M.C.A.	-	-	6	-	-

★ Qualification and Experience (For all Post) : All the rules and regulation of AICTE / GTU is followed for the appointment. Candidates can apply with their C.V., Adhar Card, PAN Card, Photocopy of all required documents and two photographs on E-Mail ID : cehod-arrdektea@gmail.com or Whatsapp No : 98258 26639.
★ Last Date for application received : 21/05/2024.
ARRDEKTA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, Khedbrahma
On Ahmedabad-Ambaji S.H. No.: 09, C/O.: EKTA Institute, At : Navi Metral, Tal.: Khedbrahma, Dist.: Sabarkantha, Gujarat-383255
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Business Brief III

Awfis Space Solutions IPO price band fixed, issue will open on May 22

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Awfis Space Solutions IPO price band has been fixed from Rs 362 to Rs 383 per share. The public issue will open on May 22 for retail investors. The last date to submit a bid will be May 27. The IPO anchor book will open on May 21. The lot size of the IPO has been fixed at 39 shares. To submit a bid in an IPO, one has to apply for at least one lot. 75 per cent of the public issue has been reserved for qualified institutional buyers (QIB). 15 per cent has been reserved for non-institutional investors (NII) and 10 per cent for retail investors. Awfis Space Solutions is an office space company. It provides office space for coworking to startups, small and medium enterprises, MNCs, and big corporate companies. The issue size of Awfis Space Solutions IPO is Rs 599 crore, of which Rs 128 crore is a fresh issue and Rs 471 crore is OFS. The IPO funds will be used by the company to set up new centres, meet working capital needs, and for general corporate purposes. The allotment of Awfis Space Solutions IPO may be released on May 28. At the same time, the withdrawal of funds can happen on May 29. The shares will be listed on NSE and BSE on May 30.

Sensex rises 155 points after positive global cues

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Indian equity benchmarks surged on Thursday, following positive Asian peers and US CPI data, which rose slightly less than expected in April. At 9:50 a.m., Sensex rose up 155 points or 0.21 per cent, at 73,159 points, and Nifty was up 47 points or 0.21 per cent, at 22,243 points. Smallcap and midcap stocks are more bullish than large-cap stocks. The Nifty Midcap 100 index was up 276 points or 0.54 per cent at 50,984 points and the Nifty Smallcap 100 index was at 16,559 points, up 102 points or 0.62 per cent. The Indian volatility index (India VIX) was slightly down at 20.21 points. Out of 30 shares of Sensex, 20 shares opened in the green and 10 shares were in the red. Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Wipro, HCL Tech, and Bharti Airtel are the top five gainers and Maruti Suzuki, Power Grid, Tata Motors, NTPC and Indusind Bank are the top five losers.

Blinkit offers 'free dhaniya' with veggies, people ask for 'hari mirch' too

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) After listening to a user's mother's suggestion who had to pay for 'dhaniya' (coriander) on Blinkit while ordering veggies, Zomato's grocery delivery platform has now started to offer 'free dhaniya' with vegetables. This move by the company has been much appreciated by a lot of users, however, they also asked to add 'hari mirch' (green chilli) with the veggies. "It's live! Everyone, please thank Ankit's mom. We will polish the feature in the next couple of weeks," Albinder Dhindsa, Blinkit's CEO, posted on X. Ankit Sawant is the X user, who highlighted the absence of complimentary offerings like 'free dhaniya' while buying vegetables, which are customary in traditional marketplaces. "Mom got a mini heart attack because she had to pay for dhaniya on Blinkit. @albinder - Mom is suggesting that you should bundle it for free with a certain amount of veggies," Sawant wrote. Upon being tagged in the post, Blinkit's CEO responded promptly, saying, "Will do". Later, in a follow-up post, Dhindsa announced the implementation of the 'free dhaniya' feature, attributing the initiative to the user's mother.

'iPad campaign was a major fumble': Tim Cook to 22-yr-old Indian student

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Apple CEO Tim Cook has called the latest iPad Pro advertisement a "major fumble", after it received backlash from social media users. Cook's comment comes after a 22-year-old Indian student ran into the CEO at Stanford while on a hike and asked him about the recent backlash the company received over its iPad campaign. "Met the one and only @tim_cook on a dish hike run at Stanford. Asked him about the new Apple iPad campaign and here's what he said," X user Shaurya Sinha, a student at Stanford University, wrote on Thursday. In the following posts, the student claimed that the Apple CEO said "Yeah that was a major fumble", when he asked about the iPad campaign. He also added that Cook was "super sweet". Recently, Apple released an advertisement for its newly launched iPad series. The controversy occurred when the ad showed a hydraulic press destroying creative instruments and devices, a move that many felt was "insensitive and disrespectful".

Global capability centres' share in Indian IT exports reach 23 pc: Report

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) The global capability centre (GCC) market is growing in India and the overall share of GCCs in total IT exports from India increased from 18 per cent in 2015 to 23 per cent last year, a report showed on Thursday. India has 1,500-1,600 global GCCs which are offshore units established by multinational companies to perform a range of strategic functions. According to HSBC Global Research, the revenue of GCCs has been growing at a CAGR of 11 per cent since 2015 compared to 8 per cent for top five Indian IT companies. The report stated that GCCs' cost/head (including salary cost and overheads) is 30-40 per cent higher than that of internet service providers (ISPs) on average. "This is due to an inferior pyramid and higher like-for-like salaries at most levels. However, as ISPs have a significant offshore markup (pricing over costs), GCCs' cost/head is 20-25 per cent cheaper than the billing rate of ISPs," the findings showed. According to Deloitte, nearly 5,000 global leadership roles are currently in GCCs in India.

iQOO launches new smartphone with 6,000mAh battery in India

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Smartphone brand iQOO on Thursday launched a new smartphone under its Z series -- Z9x, with 6,000mAh battery in India. Priced at Rs 12,999 (effective price -- Rs 11,999) for 4GB+128GB, Rs 14,499 (effective price -- Rs 12,999) for 6GB+128GB and Rs 15,999 (effective price -- Rs 14,499) for 8GB+128GB, the new smartphone comes in two colour variants -- Tornado Green and Storm Grey, and will be available for purchase on Amazon and iQOO e-store starting May 21. "The iQOO Z9x, with its sleek 7.99mm design, boasts a powerful 6000mAh battery that caters perfectly to the needs of our dynamic GenZ users. Designed for those who are always on the go, it offers a Full Day, Fully Loaded experience, merging style and performance seamlessly," Nipun Marya, CEO, iQOO, said in a statement.

News

in a Nutshell

CM Mohan Yadav failed to control crime in state, says Madhya Pradesh Cong chief Jitu Patwari

Bhopal, May 16 (IANS) Madhya Pradesh unit Congress chief Jitu Patwari on Wednesday criticised Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, saying that the state government has failed to control the incidents of crime.

Patwari said almost six months have passed since Mohan Yadav assumed the office of CM but he did not chair even a single meeting with top police officers regarding the law and order situation. The Congress leader said he had written as many as five letters to CM Mohan Yadav pointing towards the rise in incidents of crime in different parts of the state. "CM Mohan Yadav, who is also the state's home minister, has failed to control crime. Forget about the entire state, over a dozen serious crimes were reported in his home district of Ujjain in the last three-four months," Patwari said during a press conference at party headquarters here on Wednesday.

Bhojpuri star Pawan Singh says he will contest from Bihar's Karakat LS seat at any cost

Patna, May 16 (IANS) Bhojpuri star Pawan Singh has said that he will not withdraw his candidature from Bihar's Karakat Lok Sabha seat at any cost.

The actor-politician made the remarks on Wednesday after senior BJP leader and Bihar minister Prem Kumar said that Singh should withdraw his nomination otherwise the party will take action against him.

Interacting with media persons in Karakat, Singh said: "I will not withdraw my nomination... there is no point in returning from here. I am an artist, not a criminal against whom the BJP will take action against me. This is India and everyone here has the right to live a free life... No matter what anyone says, Pawan Singh will contest elections from Karakat at any cost." Singh is contesting as an independent candidate from the Karakat parliamentary constituency.

LS polls: Ex-Bihar minister Dadan Pahalwan's son files nomination from Buxar

Patna, May 16 (IANS) Nirbhay Yadav, the son of former Bihar minister Dadan Singh Yadav alias Dadan Pahalwan, filed the nomination as an independent candidate from the Buxar Lok Sabha constituency on Wednesday.

Sources said that Dadan Yadav wants to play it safe if the Election Commission rejects his nomination. If Dadan Yadav's nomination is cancelled, his son Nirbhay Yadav will contest the election from Buxar, they added.



SHEOHAR, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar addressing an election rally in favour of NDA candidate Lovely Anand at Sheohar Lok Sabha constituency, on Thursday. UNI

AAP goes into silent mode on Swati Maliwal controversy

Lucknow, May 16 (IANS) The Swati Maliwal episode is getting increasingly awkward for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

At a Press conference with Akhilesh Yadav here on Thursday, Kejriwal was at a loss to face questions on the issue and quietly shifted the microphone to AAP MP Sanjay Singh.

Singh diverted the issue of Swati Maliwal being roughed up by Delhi Police personnel when she went to support the protesting women wrestlers.

Singh evaded all questions about his meeting with Maliwal and action needed in the matter.

However, he said that the BJP should also answer about atrocities on women in Manipur, the sex scandal involving Prajwal Revanna, the harassment of women wrestlers and the incidents in Hathras and Unnao. On May 13, former Delhi Commission

for Women (DCW) chief Swati Maliwal was allegedly assaulted at the official residence of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by his personal assistant Bibhav Kumar.

That the incident took place inside the CM's residence and involved his Personal Assistant (PA) has given the opposition enough ammo to fire at the AAP supremo amid the ongoing election season.

While it is obvious for the BJP to seek political mileage out of the incident, it has raised more questions than answers.

First, and perhaps the biggest, is the silence of Kejriwal over the entire matter.

The provocation behind Kumar's alleged action has still not been made public.

Why the chief minister, who was apparently present in the house, did not intervene before or after the incident also remains unclear so

far. Secondly, and what complicates the matter further, is Maliwal's continued silence on the matter. Hailed as a champion of women's rights, she has fought against injustice and violence against women for years.

Surprisingly, on Wednesday, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav gave his platform to AAP leaders but the latter had nothing new to say to the people of Uttar Pradesh.

Kejriwal reiterated his earlier claims that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would retire at the age of 75 and Union Home Minister Amit Shah would take over as Prime Minister -- a claim that has been vehemently denied by Shah himself.

He again claimed that the UP chief minister would be removed from his position if the BJP won the elections and that reservation would be done away with.

FIR against ex-SP MLA for thrashing Dalit man in UP

Lucknow, May 16 (IANS) A former Samajwadi Party MLA Ashutosh Upadhyaya a.k.a Bablu Upadhyaya, his gunner and driver have been booked for thrashing a Dalit employee of a private company in the Gomti Nagar area in Lucknow, said police on Thursday.

As per FIR, the victim, Lalji a.k.a. Lalu of Ambedkar Nagar, works at New India Motors in the area. On Tuesday afternoon, Upadhyaya sent his gunner and driver to the company asking them to call him out of the office. Lalu alleged that Upadhyaya started abusing him immediately after he saw him and hit him with a stick which he had with him without any

provocation.

"I was abused and was showered with casteist remarks. Upadhyaya attacked me with a stick and I ran away from the scene to save myself. His driver and gunner chased me, caught me and brought me before him. I suffered head injuries in the attack," he alleged.

Deepak Pandey, SHO of the Gomti Nagar area, said on Thursday that a case under relevant sections of the IPC and SC/ST Act has been lodged. The case is being investigated and the allegations levelled are being probed, said the police officer.

"Action against the former MLA will be initiated soon," he said.

Sharad Pawar: Helped Narendra Modi a lot when he was CM, took him to Israel

Mumbai, May 16 (IANS) Day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi slammed Sharad Pawar over farmers' plight, the Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief said on Thursday that when he was the Union Minister (2004-2014), he had helped the then Gujarat Chief Minister -- now the Prime Minister -- a lot for the agricultural crisis in his state.

Sharad Pawar was the Union Agriculture Minister from 2004 to 2014.

He said that on one occasion, the then Gujarat CM once called him and said he wanted to visit Israel to study the unique farming techniques there.

"He used to come to me with the problems of the agriculture sector and even took me to Gujarat. Once he wanted to visit Israel so I took him there also. Whatever Modi says now I am not concerned," said Pawar.

Years later, Modi be-

BRS calls for protests across Telangana over farmers' issue

Hyderabad, May 16 (IANS) The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) called for protests across Telangana on Thursday against the "anti-farmer" approach of the Congress government in the state.

Alleging that the Congress has once again betrayed farmers, BRS President K. Chandrasekhar Rao appealed to the party cadres to organise protests in all constituencies.

The former Chief Minister recalled the promise of the Congress government that after the Parliamentary elections, it will pay a Rs 500 bonus per quintal for paddy but now Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is saying that the bonus will be paid only for fine quality paddy, terming it a "betrayal of farmers".

KCR, as Chandrasekhar Rao is called popularly, said 90 per cent of farmers who don't grow

fine quality paddy will be deprived of bonuses and after the polling, the Congress has again cheated the farmers.

He said if the government had made this announcement before the elections, the farmers would have taught it a lesson.

He said the Congress government has failed to provide investment support to farmers under the Rythu Bandhu scheme which was implemented by the previous BRS government. The Congress government has also failed to implement the Rythu Bharosa scheme, under which it promised enhanced investment support. He demanded that the state government expedite paddy procurement as farmers had commenced harvesting around 25-30 days ago and were waiting for procurement.

Even on earlier occasions during the ongoing Lok Sabha campaign, PM Modi has slammed Pawar for having abandoned the peasantry, and not doing anything for their welfare, while contending that the farmers benefited hugely during the last 10 years of the Bharatiya Janata Party government.--IANS

Bengal school job case: CBI secures crucial emails from WBSSC server

Kolkata, May 16 (IANS) The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials investigating the cash-for-school job case have secured a crucial exchange of emails from the server of the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC), sources said.

Although the agency insiders are tight-lipped on the contents of the email recovered by their officials from the Commission's server, sources said that these emails might help

them in pin-pointing several ineligible candidates who got their jobs against payment of money.

Sources further said that through this pinpointing process to an extent it will be possible to segregate the genuine and eligible candidates from the 2016 panel of 25,753 teaching and non-

teaching jobs in state-run schools which were cancelled last month following an order by a division bench of the Calcutta High Court.

Monsoon likely to arrive in Kerala by May 31: IMD

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has announced that this year, the southwest monsoon is likely to set in over Kerala on May 31, with a model error of ± 4 days.

Southwest monsoon normally sets in over Kerala on June 1, with a standard deviation of about seven days. IMD has been issuing operational forecasts for the date of monsoon onset over Kerala from 2005 onwards. An indigenously developed state-of-the-art statistical model with a model error of ± 4 days is used for the purpose, according

to an IMD statement. Last year, the monsoon arrived in Kerala on June 8. The IMD had forecast the arrival on June 4 with a margin of ± 4 days.

In its latest bulletin, the IMD has forecast heat-wave conditions over Northwest India from May 16 and in the eastern region from May 18. Concurrently, heavy rainfall, accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds, is anticipated over the southern states until May 20.

IMD has forecast above average monsoon rainfall in 2024, which augurs well for the country's agricultural sector which

was hit by erratic weather last year.

The monsoon, which normally arrives in Kerala around June 1 and retreats in mid-September, is expected to total 106 per cent of the long-term average this year.

India has emerged as a key exporter of foodgrains but had to resort to curbing overseas shipments of sugar, rice, wheat and onions in order to increase domestic supplies and keep prices in check due to the erratic monsoon last year which hit farm production. A robust growth in the farm sector helps to keep inflation in check.

Home Minister Amit Shah on two-day visit to Kashmir, to hold series of meetings

Srinagar, May 16 (IANS) Union Home Minister Amit Shah is arriving here on a two-day visit on Thursday evening.

"He is scheduled to chair a security review meeting in which senior officers of the Army, security forces,

intelligence agencies and local police will be present. On Friday, the Union Home Minister is scheduled to meet local party leaders, delegations from the Pahari community and trade union bodies. Civil society members are also scheduled to meet him," said Altaf Thakur, senior local BJP leader.

Amit Shah's visit comes at a time when the

BJP has fielded no party candidate in any of the three Lok Sabha seats in Kashmir.

Unofficially, the BJP has supported candidates fielded by the J&K Apni Party headed by Syed Altaf Bukhari and the People's Conference (PC) headed by Sajad Gani Lone.

J&K Apni Party has fielded Zafar Iqbal Manhas for the Anantnag-Rajouri seat and Mohd Ashraf Mir from the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat.

Sajad Gani Lone of the PC is fighting the Lok Sabha election from Baramulla constituency. J&K Apni Party has supported Sajad in the Baramulla

seat and has not fielded any candidate against him in the constituency.

The former chief minister and vice president of National Conference (NC), Omar Abdullah is fighting the election from Baramulla and he is pitched against Sajad Lone of the PC, Fayaz Ahmad Mir of the PDP and the incarcerated former MLA, Engineer Rasheed of Awami Ittihad Party.

Baramulla goes to vote on May 20 and Anantnag-Rajouri on May 25.

Srinagar constituency already went to polls on May 13 where Syed Ruhullah of the NC is fighting Waheed ur Rehman Parra of the PDP.

PoK is India and it will come back to India: EAM Jaishankar

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on Thursday said that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) is an inseparable part of the country that will eventually come back to India.

Reacting to the growing unrest and continued violence that is taking place in PoK, he said that there is no doubt that people in PoK have been watching and getting affected with the massive development that has been taking place in Jammu and Kashmir over the last few years.

"People in PoK are

seeing the positive changes across the Line of Control and they are asking themselves that if things are like that, then why are we suffering and why are we accepting this kind of mistreatment? So, they are undoubtedly getting affected by all this. We would love to see where this goes," said EAM Jaishankar while speaking at "Vishwabandhu Bharat" interaction in Nashik, Maharashtra.

Complete chaos prevails in PoK's Muzaffarabad which has been rocked by violent protests as the locals, fed up with the rising inflation and high

electricity bills, continue to clash with police over the past many days.

"PoK is a different category because eventually PoK is India and it will come back to India, I don't think we should ever have any doubt about it. Pakistan has a lot of other problems, including in Balochistan and various other parts as well," commented the EAM.

In an order passed last week, the apex court ordered CM Kejriwal to be released on interim bail in the excise policy case till June 1 and directed him to surrender on June 2.

It prohibited CM Kejriwal from signing official files unless it is required and necessary for obtaining clearance/approval of the Lt Governor of Delhi.

"If you vote for AAP, I may not go back to jail", ED brings SC's attention to CM Kejriwal's 'appeal'

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday brought to the notice of the Supreme Court statements made by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal appealing to people to vote for Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) if they wished he (Kejriwal) did not return to jail.

Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta, the second highest law officer of the Centre, representing the

ED, told a bench presided over by Justice Sanjiv Khanna, that such statements are a direct "slap on the system" and he would like to place CM Kejriwal's videos for the perusal of the apex court.

SG Mehta referred to CM Kejriwal's speech, where the AAP supremo had said that he would not have to go to jail if people voted for the "broom" symbol.

The law officer said,

"This is a slap on the system. He (Kejriwal) says, 'If you vote for me, I will not have to go to jail on June 2'. How can that happen?"

"Our order is very clear. We have fixed the timeline, i.e., the dates of release and surrender. We are not making any exception to anybody," clarified the Bench, also comprising Justice Dipankar Datta.

"He ought not to have said this. This is slapping

on the face of the institution and I take an exception to that. I leave it to that end," SG Mehta said.

In response, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing CM Kejriwal, said that the AAP leader was alleging mala fide against the government and many senior ministers of the Centre made various kinds of statements against his client. The apex court called the parties to "con-

fine" themselves to the legal questions and proceeded to hear the matter.

In an order passed last week, the apex court ordered CM Kejriwal to be released on interim bail in the excise policy case till June 1 and directed him to surrender on June 2.

It prohibited CM Kejriwal from signing official files unless it is required and necessary for obtaining clearance/approval of the Lt Governor of Delhi.



RANCHI, Jharkhand Minister Alamgir Alam being escorted out after PMLA court announced 6 Days judicial remand after arrested by Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection of seizure of uncounted cash recovered from his secretary Sanjeev Lal's residence during ED raid, in Ranchi on Thursday. UNI