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UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

NRIs fly in, line up for love of vote

KOZHIKODE/MANGALURU/BENGALURU/MEERUT: Anwar Naha, 53, an expatriate working in the UAE, cast his vote at a polling booth under Ponnani Lok Sabha constituency in Kerala's Malappuram on Friday.

He had arrived in a chartered 'vote flight' from Dubai on Wednesday just to cast his vote. Naha said that as many as five chartered flights had been arranged from UAE alone for this election, facilitated by Kerala Muslim Cultural Centre (KMCC) affiliated to the IUML. Apart from that, many expats had come home through mass bookings in normal flights. As 13 states went to polls in the third phase of Lok Sabha elections on Friday, many NRIs made it a point to fly down to cast their vote. NRIs come home, some by charter flights, to vote. Software couple Harsha DM and Spoorthi CS flew in from Sydney to exercise their franchise in Bengaluru.

While many flew to the coastal states of Kerala



and Karnataka, in the north, Meerut saw 3 NRIs fly home to exercise their voting rights. Manav Tyagi (35) hails from New Zealand, while Gaurav Gulati (37), an IT professional, returned from Germany, and Harsh Vardhan Agarwal (31) came from the US. Tyagi, a resident of Rasna village in UP's Meerut district, said, "I have been living in New Zealand for 10 years. I went there to pursue my higher studies in 2014 and got a job there. I even qualified for citizenship, but I did not take it because I did not want to let go of my right to vote in India. In New Zealand, they still conduct elections on ballots, but India is

doing a commendable job by conducting electronic polls with such a huge population." In Kerala, expats taking chartered flights back home to cast vote became the talk of the town. Hassan Chalil, state president of Dubai KMCC, who cast his vote in Nadapuram under Vadakara LS constituency, said that expat voters had come in two chartered 'vote flights' to Vadakara constituency alone. They booked flights to come home for voting from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other Gulf countries, Chalil said. According to sources, around 12 'vote flights' would have arrived in Kerala ahead of the elections. "We were able to provide tickets

to voters at a rate of AED 349 through negotiations with airline companies," Chalil, who had been working in the UAE for 35 years in the restaurant sector, said. Mangaluru saw many NRIs take leave for a few days to return home to vote. Christopher Roshan Lobo, a resident of Kulshekar near Mangaluru, said he decided to return home for the weekend rather than stay back in Bahrain where he is employed. "I flew into Mangaluru on Thursday evening and will return on Saturday," Lobo said, adding that he was among many who arrived at the polling station before it opened at 7am on Friday. Gokuldas Bhat, from Belthangady who owns and runs a transport company in Kuwait, gave 45 of his employees two days leave to return and vote, while Abdulla Madumoole from Abu Dhabi posted on X: "Spent almost 1 lakh rupees for this one mark — in an effort to bring back sanity.

SC rejects return to ballots, says distrust of EVMs 'blind'

NEW DELHI: Supreme Court on Friday dismissed doubts about hacking and manipulation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), termed pleas for return to the paper ballot system as "foible and unsound" and rejected the prayer for giving voters physical access to VVPAT slips, and for 100% counting of paper slips.

The court was unequivocal in attesting to the integrity of the machines, saying the possibility of hacking or tampering with EVM to tutor/favour results was unfounded. "Accordingly, the suspicion that EVMs can be configured/manipulated for repeated or wrong recording of vote(s) to favour a particular candidate should be rejected," it said. The verdict marked a big blow to the high-wattage campaign against EVMs, especially since 2014 when BJP under Narendra Modi pulled off a stunning victory. SC rejects return to bal-



lots, says distrust of EVMs 'blind' A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, however, passed directions to further strengthen the integrity of the system and ordered that like EVMs, the symbol loading units shall be sealed and secured after completion of symbol loading process in the VVPATs (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail). It also granted an option to the runner-up and the candidate finishing third to get burnt memory/microcontroller in 5% of EVMs — control unit, ballot unit and VVPAT unit — per assembly constituen-

cy/assembly segment of a parliamentary constituency checked and verified after the announcement of results for any tampering. The apex court examined threadbare the administrative and technical safeguards in EVMs and concluded that there was no substance in the allegations. "Repeated and persistent doubts and despair, even without supporting evidence, can have the contrarian impact of creating distrust. This can reduce citizen participation and confidence in elections, essential for a healthy and robust democracy.

Relief for lessors: Delhi high court directs DGCA to de-register 54 GoAir planes

The lessors of 54 aircraft to grounded-since-last May GoAir finally got relief on several counts from the Delhi high court on Friday which directed the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to de-register these planes within a maximum of five working days. The revival of GoAir under IBC is now an even tougher task as the lessors are learnt to be wooed by both Tata's Air India and cash-rich IndiGo to get around 15.

Modi brackets TMC with Congress for its silence on inheritance tax controversy

KOLKATA/MALDA/PATNA: PM Narendra Modi blamed Trinamool Congress on Friday for leaving nearly 26,000 families in Bengal without a livelihood by orchestrating an alleged hiring scam that forced Calcutta HC to scrap appointments made by the School Service Commission in 2016 and order some recruits to return their salaries with interest.

"Trinamool has played with the future of Bengal's youth. Not only have they lost their source of income because of the school recruitment scam, these youth have been saddled with loans they had taken to pay Trinamool functionaries," Modi said at a poll rally in Malda.

The PM bracketed CM Mamata Banerjee's party with Congress on the inheritance tax row, questioning the former's "silence" both on the grand old party's plan to "loot" citizens and give away their wealth to "infiltrators". "Loot zindagi ke saath bhi, zindagi ke baad bhi (Loot in life and after death)," he said, iterating what he said at Chhattisgarh's Surguja two days ago.

Thanking the crowd for its love and affection, the PM said, "At times, I feel I was born in Bengal in a previous birth. Or maybe I will be born to a Bengal mother in my next birth." Malda district has two constituencies: Malda (North) and Malda (South). According to the 2011 census, Muslims constitute 51% of the population. While BJP won Malda (North) and Congress Malda (South) in 2019, TMC made significant gains in the panchayat polls. In Bihar's Araria and Munger, Modi focused on Congress's "Karnataka model of robbing OBCs of their 27% quota" by including all Muslims.

Cong distances itself from VVPAT pleas, but says will fight on

NEW DELHI: As SC rejected all the petitions seeking 100% cross verification of EVM votes with their voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) slips, Congress distanced itself saying that it was "not a party, directly or indirectly" to the pleas in SC. "We have taken note of the verdict of the two-judge bench and our political campaign on the greater use of VVPATs to



increase public trust in the electoral process will continue," said Congress, while general secretary Jairam Ramesh on X. In another post later in the day, Ramesh, while responding to the attack by PM Modi on

the opposition with regard to the EVM verdict, reiterated that Congress did not have anything to do with the pleas in SC. "Nevertheless, PM says that SC verdict on VVPATs is a tight slap to the opposition and that we should apologise to the nation. Remember that a few weeks ago SC had given PM a tighter slap - in fact, a spanking - by declaring the corruption.

Congress wants to bring back Muslim personal law: Shah

BHOPAL: Union home minister Amit Shah alleged on Friday that Congress's election manifesto promises to bring back Muslim personal law, while PM Narendra Modi's guarantee is to implement a uniform civil code (UCC) across the country. Addressing a poll rally in Ashokenagar, in Guna Lok Sabha seat, on Friday afternoon, Shah said, "The country will be run on uniform civil code. We have brought UCC in Uttarakhand. It is our promise, and Modi-ji's guarantee, that we will implement UCC throughout the country," he said. "Listen carefully to



the Congress manifesto. They have said, 'We will again implement personal law'," Shah said. "Tell me, what does personal law have to do with them? They want to bring back Muslim personal law. Can this country be run by Shariat? Do we have to bring back triple talaq? Rahul Baba can do anything he wants for appeasement politics, but so

long as BJP is here we will not permit personal law." "What kind of secular Constitution do you want in this country? Our Constitution is secular. The laws of this country cannot be on the basis of religion," he said. Congress believes Muslims have the first right to the country's resources, but for BJP the poor, Dalits, OBCs and

Kerala CPM neta cosyng up to BJP? 'Friendly chat' triggers

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Speculation about CPM central committee member and LDF convenor EP Jayarajan preparing to join BJP flared up on polling day in Kerala after the politician admitted to meeting the saffron party's state in-charge Prakash Javadekar. Jayarajan said in Kannur on Friday that he didn't discuss politics with Javadekar when they met at his son's apartment on his



grandchild's birthday recently. "He (Javadekar) was passing through when he dropped by for a friendly chat. TG Nandakumar (the alleged middleman) was with him. Could I have asked him to get

out of our house?" The CPM veteran said Javadekar did try to broach politics, but he cut him short. "I discouraged him by saying I am not interested in it." CM Pinarayi Vijayan advised his senior colleague to be "cautious" about who he was being seen with. "There is nothing wrong in Jayarajan meeting any rival politician. But the presence of a suspicious middleman should have been avoided.

At SCO meeting, India calls for 'zero-tolerance' policy on terror

NEW DELHI: India has stressed the need to adopt "a zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism in all its forms" for prosperity and development of member states of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which also included. Pakistan. Defence secretary Girdhar Aramane, who led the Indian delegation at SCO defence ministers' meeting at Astana in Kazakhstan, underlined India's steadfast commitment towards maintaining peace, stability and security in the region. In keeping with defence minister Rajnath Singh's earlier statement that all SCO members should collectively work towards.

'Divest': US students demand universities to cut Israel ties

NEW YORK: The students at Columbia University who inspired Palestinian demonstrations across the country dug in at their encampment for the 10th day Friday as administrators and police at campuses from California to Massachusetts wrestled with how to address protests that have seen scuffles with police and hundreds of arrests. Officials at Columbia and some other schools have been negotiating with students who have rebuffed police and doubled down. Other schools have quickly turned to law enforcement to douse demonstrations before they can take hold.

As the death toll mounts in the war in Gaza and the humanitarian crisis worsens, protesters at universities across the country are demanding schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies they say are enabling the conflict. "Disclose! Divest!" marchers have been shouting, calling on universities to cease investing in suppliers of Israeli weapons. Universities have so far rebuffed exhortations to divest. Defenders of Israel say these calls are unfair to a country that is under threat of attack, and anti-Semitic because they target the only Jewish-majority nation in the world.

Chief Development Officer inaugurated the Pink Bike Rally by cutting the ribbon for voter awareness

Prayagraj: Under the Voter Awareness Program (SWEP) of the Lok Sabha General Election-2024, a bike rally started from the Head Post Office Prayagraj at 10 am today on 26.04.2024 and ended at the Diet Office Civil Lines Square ahead of Subhash Square via the Church. The Bike Pink Rally was organized in joint coordination of the Department of Child Development Services and Nutrition and the Indian Postal Department, in which about 300 people participated. The Pink Bike Rally

was inaugurated by Gaurav Kumar Chief Development Officer Prayagraj, Gaurav Srivastava, Director Indian Postal Services Region Prayagraj jointly by cutting the ribbon at the premises of the GPO office. Dinesh Singh District Program Officer, Senior Postal Superintendent Abhishek Srivastava, Senior Postmaster Rajesh Srivastava, Om Prakash Yadav Child Development Project Officer City-2, State Reference Giver Dr. Prabhakar Tripathi along with officers and employees



of Child Development and Postal Department were present in the inauguration program. The Chief Development Officer appealed to more and more voters to exercise their franchise on May 25, 2024 through the Bike Pink Rally by connecting them to the voter awareness program. Along with the Bike Pink Rally, a walking awareness rally was also organized by the Child Development Department and both the rallies halted at Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance Office, Civil Lines Prayagraj where the Divisional Manager of Kotak Life, Pradyumna Yadav, along with his subordinates,

welcomed the voter awareness rally by offering a bouquet and showered flowers on the rally. He appealed for 100% voting and appealed to everyone to contribute to nation building by using their votes. The District Program Officer Prayagraj led the awareness rally by driving a bike himself ahead of the Kotak Life office and through Subhash Chauraha, Civil Lines Bus Stand and DIET Office, every voter was appealed to use their voting rights on the upcoming polling day.

With homes turning into offices and online classes becoming the new normal, work from home and online school enablers such as laptops, books, headphones and computer accessories are high in demand. The e-commerce giants also witnessed pent up demand for "priority products" like electronics, kitchen and home appliances, smart devices, laptops, phone accessories and apparel. With mercury soaring, Flipkart sellers are seeing significant spike in demand for fans, air coolers and air-conditioners. While people continue to maintain social distancing, fashion choices have become more functional. Innerwear, lounge-wear and women's sleepwear are seeing an increased demand.

Doctors vouch for medicated mosquito nets

PRAYAGRAJ: With traditional methods proving ineffective against mosquito-borne diseases like dengue, chikungunia and malaria, health officials are now propagating the use of medicated mosquito nets and neem oil to ward off mosquitoes. Officials of the health department say the medicated mosquito nets are of great use for protecting children, pregnant women and others who have diminished immunity to ailments. Fresh studies conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) also confirmed that medicated mosquito nets can reduce childhood mortality by as much as one-third in malaria-ridden parts of the globe.

Additional director, health & family welfare says medicated nets also

provide protection against many other small insects such as sand flies that can penetrate most nets.

Doctors say the malaria-causing mosquito known as the Anopheles mosquito usually attacks people at night when they are sleeping. However, since mosquitoes are repelled by the net, other people sleeping in the same room will also benefit even if they aren't using the net. The insecticide treated nets (ITNs) or medicated nets were developed for malaria prevention. They are estimated to be twice as effective as untreated nets. For maximum effectiveness, medicated nets should be re-impregnated with insecticide every six months. However, this may pose a significant logistical problem in rural areas.

Health talk on Cardiology and Nephrology organised at NCR HQ

Prayagraj: A health talk was organised at NCR HQ Aravali conference hall Prayagraj by Central Hospital/ NCR and Indraprastha Apollo Hospital New Delhi on Cardiology and Nephrology. General Manager, North Central Railway, Shri Ravinder Goyal was chief guest of the program.

Scientific session started with welcome of chief guest by Principal Chief Medical Director Dr J P Rawat. Medical Director Central Hospital Dr SK Handoo welcomed PCMD Dr J P Rawat. Senior Consultant cardiology, I P



Apollo Hospital Dr K K Saxena spoke on the topic "life style management and prevention of heart disease". He emphasised importance of blood pressure, sugar and cholesterol control in management of coronary artery diseases. Dr D. K. Agarwal Senior consultant Nephrology, I P Apollo Hospital presented his talk on the topic "know your kidney". He explained the complicated functions of kidney in simple language to audience. He also briefed importance of dietary restrictions, hemodialysis and kidney transplantation in kidney diseases.

Guest speakers were honoured by GM/NCR. All Principle Head of Departments, Head of Departments and officers and employees of headquarter attended the program. It was interactive session with audience who cleared their doubts on heart and kidney diseases. Anchoring of the program was done by Additional Chief Health Director Dr Kalpana Mishra. In closing session General Manager North Central Railway gave message for regular health check up, exercise and management of stress in our day to day life.

Car hits roadside tree, 4 killed in UP

Four injured are being treated

Rae Bareilly: Four people were killed and many more injured on Friday after their automobile collided with a culvert and a tree on the side of the road, according to authorities. According to police, the event occurred in the early morning at Malin Purva village in the Mill Area police station area, while the victims were returning from Fursatganj in Amethi. Their car, Scorpio, smashed into culvert and subsequently hit tree

on roadside leaving all persons in car wounded, SHO Sanjay Singh said. Four victims, Pankaj Pal (30), Raghavendra Yadav (50), Deepak Pal (28) and Awadhesh Pal (45), were certified dead by medics after being carried to the hospital, according to the SHO. He stated that the four injured are being treated. Corpses have been submitted for post-mortem, and additional investigation is continuing.

Decision postponed for 9th time in arson case against SP MLA Irfan Solanki

Kanpur: The verdict in the arson case registered against SP MLA Irfan Solanki, lodged in Maharajanjanj jail, was postponed for the ninth time on Friday. MP/MLA Court Special Judge Satyendra Nath Tripathi has now fixed April 29 as the next date. The court had ordered written arguments on some points on the previous date, but the MLA's lawyer did not make written arguments. A dozen people, including SP MLA from Sisamau seat Irfan Solanki and his brother Rizwan, are accused of harassing Nazir Fatima living near their residence and wanted to take possession of the plot. Regarding this, the accused had conspired and set fire to the hut built on the plot. The hearing of the case is going on in the Kanpur MP/MLA court and on Friday once again the court postponed the decision saying that on the previous date, orders for written arguments on some points were given to the defense and the prosecution but the defense has not yet filed the required paperwork.

Fitness equipment click with e-shoppers!

PRAYAGRAJ: From slaving away over rusty iron to power yoga session, building muscles was all about slogging at the gym for Vivek Arora. However, coronavirus left many fitness enthusiasts like Vivek confined to their homes after the government ordered closure of all non-essential businesses like gyms to control the spread of Covid-19. With the government allowing e-commerce giants to deliver non-essential items, fitness equipment like cycles, treadmills, badminton racquets, cricket bats and dumbbells have become "new essentials" figuring among top selling products online.

Yoga and lounge pants, sports bras and T-shirts are also selling like hotcakes. With families also having different entertainment, professional and educational needs, multiple

screens are also high in demand. "As social distancing has become the norm, consumers have turned their home spaces into gym to keep their fitness regime intact. Consumers are increasingly ordering athleisure wear and fitness equipment as they explore different stay-at-home exercises," a Flipkart spokesperson said.

"Importance of healthy lifestyle has led people look for products such as yoga and lounge pants, sports bras and T-shirts. Sports shoes are growing in popularity among consumers across the country. Men's sportswear has seen an uptake in demand for shorts, track pants, T-shirts and caps," he added.

Sellers on Amazon.in saw a massive demand for fitness equipment. With helps still being denied entry in several houses, ro-

botic vacuum cleaners are also in demand. A spokesperson for Amazon India said, "We saw 31 times growth in demand for robotic vacuum cleaners, 10 times for dumbbells and weights, 23 times for dishwashers, 12.5 times for bicycle trainers, 2.3 times for women's flip flops, 3.5 times for innerwear, 3.9 times for guitars and 3.6 times for children's books."

Kiran Dubey, a fitness freak, is finally able to resume her intensive workout session, which had taken a pause in March-end. "Working out in gym will never be the same again. So I converted our guest room into a mini-gym." Decathlon India, one of the world's biggest sports retailers, also saw a surge in orders related to home workouts. "People are mostly ordering bodybuilding and cross-training products besides cardio

equipment. Cycles are also in demand," an official at Decathlon India said.

With homes turning into offices and online classes becoming the new normal, work from home and online school enablers such as laptops, books, headphones and computer accessories are high in demand. The e-commerce giants also witnessed pent up demand for "priority products" like electronics, kitchen and home appliances, smart devices, laptops, phone accessories and apparel. With mercury soaring, Flipkart sellers are seeing significant spike in demand for fans, air coolers and air-conditioners. While people continue to maintain social distancing, fashion choices have become more functional. Innerwear, lounge-wear and women's sleepwear are seeing an increased demand.

Volkswagen Passenger Cars India announces new dealership in Kashi

Varanasi: Volkswagen Passenger Cars India inaugurated a new customer touchpoint in Kashi, further bolstering its presence in the state as part of the Brand's wider push to make its products and services more accessible to Indian customers. Under the leadership of Mr. Sachin Talwar, Dealer Partner, Volkswagen Kashi, the 3S (Sales, Spares and Service) facility comprises of a team of 45 sales and service executives who will be actively interacting with customers. The three-car display will showcase

the Volkswagen Virtus sedan and Taigun SUV as well as the Brand's flagship product, the Tiguan. In addition, customers can also experience the newly introduced variants, the Taigun GT Line and Taigun GT Plus Sport at the showroom.

Mr. Ashish Gupta, Brand Director of Volkswagen Passenger Cars India said, "The inauguration of our newest touchpoint in Kashi highlights our dedication to fulfilling a rising need for premium, safe, and reliable vehicles throughout India. We

have observed a changing demand pattern, with Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities accounting

active strategy recognizes this shift and seeks to capitalize on the growth oppor-



for 35-40% of our sales. As a result, we are directing our attention towards these emerging markets. Our pro-

ducts and world-class service facilities are accessible to a broader customer base across the nation, including in Kashi.

Commenting on the newly inaugurated touchpoint, Mr. Sachin Talwar, Dealer Partner, Volkswagen Kashi said, "We are delighted to partner with Volkswagen India and offer their premium mobility solutions to customers in Kashi. We are witnessing significant customer interest owing to their safest product portfolio comprising of the

Volkswagen Taigun, Virtus and Tiguan. We look forward to welcoming customers at the new touchpoint and build a long-lasting relationship." Hassle-free ownership experience for customers in Kashi as the service touchpoint is equipped with 14 service bays that can cater to body & paint repairs, vehicle service and maintenance along with required spare parts. With this introduction, Volkswagen now has a 208 sales & pre-owned car and 142 service touchpoints across 155 cities in India.

Radio City to Redefine Entertainment with their launch on JioTV

Varanasi: Radio City, a trailblazer in vibrant music and engaging content, is thrilled to announce its debut on JioTV. This pioneering fusion marks a significant milestone as Radio City becomes the first-ever radio station in the country to introduce a 24x7 video channel under the banner of RCStudio.

This launch on JioTV not only extends the reach of Radio City but also provides advertisers with limitless opportunities to engage with a nationwide audience. Through this association, Radio City will be able to reach out to JioTV's massive audience base across the country. The JioTV mobile app which has over 1,000 channels in more than 16 languages and 12 genres from over 200 broadcasters is available to all the Jio subscribers across the country.

Through this launch, Radio City will touch the

nerves of the younger, digitally savvy generation, leveraging their attraction to screens to reignite their interest in radio. By embracing the new digital platform, Radio City will deliver phenomenal content that echoes with the Gen Z. RC Studio will also be available on connected TVs through JioTV+ which comes as a part of JioFiber and AirFiber.

This initiative will be pivotal in bridging the gap between different audience segments and expanding Radio City's reach to a larger demographic, creating a more inclusive and vibrant entertainment approach. The launch of RC Studio propels Radio City into the digital era by enriching the entertainment experience for its audience with the JioTV app which is now also available on MyJio app and JioBharat phones.

BJP legal cell complains to EC against Owaisi's remark

Varanasi: AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi participated in the public meeting of PDM Nyaya Morcha in Varanasi Natimli last Thursday. In the public meeting, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi, in his own style, fiercely attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, RSS and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. BJP Law Cell has expressed displeasure over the statement of Asaduddin Owaisi and has complained to the Election Commission about his inflammatory statement. Legal cell Kashi area coordinator advocate Shashank Shekhar Tripathi said on Friday that vote bank politics was done by hurting religious sentiments and making inflammatory statements.

Aishshpra Gems and Jewels' store become even grander

The new location of the leading jewellery chain and most favored jewelry brand by customers in North India, Aishshpra Gems & Jewels, is now situated near the Sudarshan Petrol Pump in Civil Lines, Azamgarh. The inauguration of this magnificent new company owned store, equipped with modern amenities, was carried out today by the honorable Member of Parliament of Azamgarh and renowned Bhojpuri film star, Shri Dinesh Lal Yadav 'Nirahua'. On this occasion, Patron of Gems and Jewels Mr. Balkrishna Saraf, Directors Mr. Atul Saraf, Mr. Anoop Saraf, Mr. Vaibhav Saraf and Mr. Saumitra Saraf were present.

On this occasion, a great offer is also being given to the customers. In which customers will be given a free gold coin on the purchase of every gold, diamond and silver jewellery.

Speaking at the inauguration of the store, the honorable Member of Parliament and renowned Bhojpuri film star, Shri Dinesh Lal Yadav 'Nirahua', expressed his joy, saying, "With the opening of this store, the citizens here will



have access to high-quality jewellery, which will inspire others to invest here, leading to the rapid development of the area."

At the inauguration of the store, Mr. Atul Saraf said, "The affection of the people of Azamgarh has always been with us, which is why we have brought this store to the heart of the city in Civil Lines. Our en-

deavor is to provide the people of the region with the convenience of buying high-quality jewellery locally. Aishshpra Gems and Jewels has always been committed to providing the best experience to its customers."

During the inauguration of the new store, Mr. Vaibhav Saraf stated, "This new store of Aishshpra Gems and Jewels in Azamgarh will be recognized for better service and quality jewellery for the people of the region. Additionally, this store will give new dimensions to the jewellery business in the region."

AU to host inaugural alumni meet

PRAYAGRAJ: Allahabad University (AU) is set to host its first alumni meet, the "Familiar Faces Fiesta," organised by the registered University of Allahabad Alumni Association on April 27 and 28, beginning Saturday. Many former students from pre-1996 are expected to attend, including a former Chief Justice of India, four sitting Supreme Court judges, and five former Supreme Court judges. Additionally, both current and former high court judges will participate in this two-day event, as noted by AU vice-chancellor Prof Sangita Srivastava in a press briefing on Friday, ahead of the meet's inauguration on Saturday.

The meet will also include administrative officials from the office of the President of India, the department of science and technology, and other central ministries and departments. Among the notable attendees from the entertainment industry is renowned filmmaker Tigmanshu Dhulia, the vice-chancellor said.

Around 1,200 alumni have registered for this event, Prof Srivastava added. The VC also mentioned that a decision has been made to make the alumni meet a regular event at the university, with plans to hold it every February. Among the attendees at this meet are former Chief

Justice of India Justice VN Khare, as well as sitting Supreme Court judges Justice Vikram Nath, Justice Pankaj Mittal, and Justice



Sudhanshu Dhulia. Retired Supreme Court judges attending the event include Justice Ashok Bhushan, Justice Krishna Murari, and Justice Vineet Sharan. Over

40 sitting judges from the Allahabad high court are set to attend, including Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta, Justice Anjani Kumar

Singh, and Justice Rahul Chaturvedi, among others.

The inaugural alumni meet will also launch the University's Alumni Association mobile app, "UoAAA." Additionally, a film about the university, titled "The Banyan Tree," will be screened, and the university's memento "The Banyan Tree: Memoirs and Dreams" will be released.

A food court and arts and crafts exhibition have been set up near Nirala Art Gallery by the department of visual arts, the department of fashion technology, and the department of family and community sciences. This was inaugurated on Friday evening. The coffee table book, "The

Glory of University of Allahabad," recently published by the university, will also be available for sale. Registration at library lawn: The registration desk for alumni attending the meet will be located at the library lawn. Faculty members from the university and its affiliated colleges will be issued identity cards in advance.

Kumar Vishwas's poetry recitation on April 28: On the evening of April 28, the renowned poet Kumar Vishwas will entertain participants with his poetry at the Banyan Lawn of the university. Other poets, including Sandeep Bhola, Kavita Tiwari, Rajeev Raj, and Priyanshu Gajendra, will also recite their works.

Human couriers sneaking in guns from MP's Khandwa for 2 years

PRAYAGRAJ: Needy youths are being used as human couriers by gangs to sneak in illegal firearms into UP from Khandwa district of MP for two years now, the UP Special Task Force (STF), which busted a gang in Allahabad a couple of months ago, has revealed.

So far this year, the STF has seized 211 arms and 472 cartridges in different districts. More than 60% of these arms were sourced from Khandwa, which is emerging as the new illegal arms manufacturing den in north India. Earlier, Munger district of Bihar had the monopoly, cops said. Both are known for making unauthorised firearms far better in quality than

those improvised in UP's Lucknow, Barabanki, Hardoi and Shahjahanpur districts. ASP (STF) Satyasen Yadav said since 2018, Khandwa became a major hub of illegal arms. "The Sikligar tribe in this region has become adept in making lookalikes of the German Mauser and the Italian Beretta, with similar 9mm and .30 and .32 bores."

The ASP said these duplicates were sold at affordable prices. "Hence, Khandwa is giving stiff competition to Munger. The guns made here are more sophisticated and lighter in weight," he said, adding that the arms of Khandwa had also made inroads in NCR and Rajasthan.

On the marketing strategy, Yadav said

contrary to Bihar gangs, who smuggle firearms in bulk, those in MP use human couriers. "Our investigations have revealed that they search for needy youths and lure them with handsome commission. These youths bring in arms - usually one or two at a time - by bus. Initially, the gangs tried to sneak in 10-12 guns at a time, but many couriers got arrested. Now, they have changed strategy," the ASP said. Another senior STF officer said, "People with licensed guns must be asked to submit all shells before being issued live cartridges." The officer also hinted that licensed arms holders often sold ammunition in the grey market for a premium.

Prayagraj sizzles as mercury soars

Prayagraj: With the mercury soaring high and maintaining over 40 degree Celsius for the past one week, April sky is turning out to be a burning inferno in the city. The temperature is constantly following an erratic scale, even crossing 43 degrees while the minimum reaches 24.7 de-



grees. As per Met department, the denizens would not be getting any relief from the ongoing heat as temperature would gradually keep an upward trend with sporadic hail storms.

The dusty condition and temperature keeping above normal in the northern plains is the fallout of tampering with na-

ture at macro level which would surely affect the climate at the micro level such as specific part of a landmass. The months to follow would be equally warm with occasional thunderstorms which would not be a favourable sign for harvesting of crops.

The Met department also hints at no respite from the hot conditions. During this time of summer, hot dry conditions are nothing new, the only difference is it is not following a steady incline which hints at some erratic behaviour. However, the hot weather would be of great help as it would create conducive conditions for 'loo' in the northern plains which will create an area of low pressure. Winds from high pressure, which would be over Bay of Bengal, would then come rushing towards the northern plain and fill the low-pressure area, thus bring monsoon on time.

However, despite rise in temperature, farmers are hopeful of getting a favourable monsoon this year. "In our experience whenever there are constant hot conditions, 'loo' starts blowing which is of prime importance in bringing a normal monsoon," said Rinku, a farmer from Meja. Restrictions on outdoor activities, while mid-day meals continue. Meteorological department warns of high temperatures in various districts, urging public to stay hydrated and wear light clothing.

Mentally unstable youth kills grandfather, nabbed

PRAYAGRAJ: A mentally unstable youth killed his grandfather in his sleep by attacking him with a stick and a brick in Badalganj village under Ghoorpur police station area on Wednesday night. mPolice arrived at the site on getting the information and arrested the youth. Police said that the victim, 65-year-old Vijay Bahadur was a resident of Chitauri village of the police station area and lived with his son-in-law Gagan in Badalganj. On Wednesday night, the old man was sleeping on the cot when Gagan's son Sukhraj suddenly came home at night

and attacked the sleeping old man with a stick and brick killing him on the spot. Police reached the site and arrested the accused.

The accused was then sent to jail after lodging an FIR against him in connection with the murder on Thursday. Family members of the accused told police officials that Sukhraj was mentally unstable for past many months. He used to live at a brick kiln in the village instead of the house. He came home suddenly on Wednesday night and attacked his grandfather sans any provocation killing him on the spot.

Varanasi hosp nurse found murdered in Prayagraj

Prayagraj: A 38-year-old woman working as a nurse in a private hospital in Varanasi was allegedly bludgeoned to death and her body was found near Jogipura area under Mauaima police station on Wednesday morning. The woman was on way to Aruaon Sitau Ka Pura village in Holagarh area of Prayagraj when the incident happened. Police registered a case against unidentified killers on the complaint of the victim's husband on Thursday.

As per the police, the victim, identified as Rinki Yadav, hailing from Virbhanpur village under Baghrhai police station of Pratapgarh was married to Sanjay Singh Yadav, a resident of Khuldabad area of Prayagraj. Sanjay makes a living as a bulk vegetable seller while Rinki worked as

a nurse in a private hospital in Varanasi. The couple's son Vikas also ran a tea stall next to this hospital. Vikas had come to Aruaon in Holagarh to attend a birthday party at his aunt's house. Rinki too left Varanasi for Aruaon Sitau Ka Pura village in Holagarh area of Prayagraj to attend a family function at her other sister's house. But she never reached her intended destination.

SHO of Mauaima police station Raghvendra Singh said that body of the victim has been sent for a postmortem examination and a case has been registered on the complaint of the victim's husband. "We are investigating the case from all angles to find the motive of the crime and the killer. Mobile phone call records of the victim too are being scrutinised," he said.

Indigenous cycle to help railway staff maintain tracks better

PRAYAGRAJ: An indigenous and cost-effective unique track-cycle will help inspecting railway staff and trackmen in maintaining the rail tracks throughout the day. Designed and built by a team of experts, led by assistant divisional engineer (line), Bhupesh Pandey and senior section engineer (PA) Abhay Kumar of engineering department of Prayagraj division, North Central Railway (NCR), the invention promises to drastically reduce the labour and stress faced by railway trackmen in the country.

Costing just Rs 3,000, this innovative rail-bicycle will help trackmen quickly travel on rail tracks for inspection, monitoring, and urgent repairs. It is convenient and can ferry two people at a time. It will also help in reducing response time to mitigate track issues, said officials.

The prototype of this

special cycle was recently tested by the divisional regional manager (DRM) Amitabh and senior divisional engineer (coordination), Santosh Gupta, officials added. PRO, Prayagraj division, Keshev Tripathi said that the track-cycle was made out of scrap. Experts joined two cycles side by side while modifying the ordinary cycle.

"Both the rear wheels of this cycle are similar to an ordinary cycle while the front frame is longer than the usual frame. The front wheel, made of Teflon, is made in such a way that it fits into the railway track and when the user pedals, it works like any other cycle," explained the PRO. The cycle weighs just about 25 kilograms. The PRO said the cycle will be a great help to trackmen who have to undertake urgent repairs/inspections of tracks during inclement weather too.

Dimple Yadav is the sister-in-law of goons, mafia and criminals

WIDOWS OF SLAIN LEADERS IN UP

PRAYAGRAJ: After making political statements on the Pulwama terror attack, SP MP from Mainpuri Dimple Yadav drew severe flak from several women whose husbands were murdered during the Samajwadi Party government in Uttar Pradesh. Former MLA late Krishnanand Rai's widow, Alka Rai; Prayagraj advocate late Umesh Pal's spouse Jaya Pal and late Anil Singh's wife Sita Singh responded to Dimple's remarks on Friday about 'mangalsutra' (traditional piece of jewellery worn by married women) by launching a robust counterattack.

In a veiled attack on the BJP over Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's 'mangalsutra' remark, SP leader Dimple Yadav has said on Wednesday that the party should answer "who snatched the mangalsutra of wives of soldiers killed in Pulwama".

Jaya remarked that speaking on the Pulwama issue does not suit Dimple Yadav. "Dimple Yadav is the sister-in-law of goons, mafia and criminals. Today, when all these mafias are being eliminated, they are unhappy. The mangalsutra of many sisters like me has been snatched away by mafias backed by the Samajwadi Party."

She continued, "Where was Dimple at the time when

my husband and two policemen were being showered with bullets? Many children were left orphaned. Many sisters still weep, remembering their brothers. "Dimple cannot comprehend the pain of removing 'mangalsutra' and breaking bangles. Her party aims for Islamisation of the country, where 'mangalsutra' holds no significance," she said.

Jaya also mentioned that on the day Dimple Yadav's father-in-law opened fire on Ram devotees, who will give the account of the Mangalsutra of those widows? "What will happen to the mangalsutra of those whose marriages were ruined in Kairana,

Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur? If Dimple steps out of Saifai, she will witness that our courageous soldiers have taken complete revenge for the Pulwama attack through surgical strike," she pointed out. Hitting back at Dimple Yadav on her comment regarding 'mangalsutra', former MLA late Krishnanand Rai's wife Alka Rai, remarked: "Seven people were killed at the time of my husband's murder, including block chief and policemen. Where was Dimpleji at that time? Why didn't she go even once to wipe the tears of widows and orphans? We kept running from pillar to post,

seeking justice, but the SP government did not budge at all. During that period, figures such as Lal Krishna Advani and Rajnath Singh were staging protests, yet no SP leader extended a hand to alleviate our suffering," she said.

Echoing her sentiments, late Anil Singh's widow advised Dimple Yadav to refrain from commenting on Pulwama, an issue efficiently handled by the Indian government under the leadership of PM Modi.

Sita Singh stated: "Mukhtar Ansari got my husband and brother-in-law murdered. There are numerous women like myself who, after their husbands

fell victim to the mafia, raised small children single-handedly. We didn't get any justice until Yogiji (Adityanath) came. Now in Yogiji's tenure, mafias are being wiped out one by one."

Samajwadi Party leader Dimple was referring to Modi's allegations at an election rally that if the Congress came to power, it would redistribute the wealth of people to Muslims and cited former prime minister Manmohan Singh's statement that the minority community had the first claim on the country's resources. "They won't even spare your 'mangalsutra'," Modi had said.

EDUCATION LOANS TURN DEBT TRAPS FOR STUDENTS

PRAYAGRAJ: When Aditya Pandey took admission into an MBA course in a prominent private college of the city three years ago, he was shown big dreams of a job with a six-figure salary along with perks in a multi-national company after completion of course. He was awarded an MBA degree last year back. But Aditya is yet to land a job. At the time of admission, he took an education loan of Rs 5 lakh and now, its interest has reached over Rs 70,000. With no income, Aditya and his family are facing a tough time.

Like Aditya, hundreds of students who enrolled in professional courses and passed out from different well-known private institutions of the district, are facing a similar situation. In spite of loud claims by institutes to provide placements after completion of the course, a majority of the passouts have failed to secure a job. Their families are being forced to repay the educational loans which they took from banks at the time of admission.

Thousands of students residing in Allahabad and neighbouring districts en-

roll for courses of private institutes which have mushroomed in the city. As these institutes charge hefty fees, a majority of the students are compelled to take education loans. Students take these loans on the basis of promises made by the private college authorities of securing them lucrative careers ahead. Once the course is completed, they are left in the lurch with no jobs as the college placements are

almost next to nil. Besides looking for a job, students have to worry about repaying loans and rising inter-



est with every passing month.

One such student Swapnil Arora, who completed B.Tech last year, said, "In most of the colleges,

the name of a 'job' but no salary is paid for it. They are informed that they will be hired once the training period completes and this is usually of three months. However, after the training gets over, they are asked to leave from company without a job."

Akansha, who hold a degree in Master of Journalism and Mass Communication, said, "The salary package offered to us is barely Rs 1 lakh per annum. No one is ready to give us a monthly salary of more than Rs 12,000 and now, we are in a fix whether to run the

household or repay the loan."

A grocery shopkeeper Rakesh Tripathi, whose son did not get a job after completing a Master of Computer Application, lamented, "I thought that my son will lend me a helping hand but now, I am forced to repay his loan." The bank authorities say that such incidents are sharply rising. "Many banks face cases where they are unable to recover the education loan. Banks have now become more cautious in giving loans to students. The education loan is now

being approved on the basis of records and achievements of students," said Arfaat Khan, manager HDFC Bank.

Though the management of colleges help students in getting loans, they wash their hands of after students fail to repay the loan. "We have people who assist students in securing education loan. However, if students cannot repay loan, the matter is between students and bank, and hence, the institute doesn't come in between them," claims manager of private institute on the condition of anonymity.

Editorial

hHarnessing clean energy

India's progress in renewable energy infrastructure Some of the above factors provide the structural framework for locating India's approach to renewable energy security discourses. One needs to underline here that over the years, India has made tremendous progress with regard to boosting the domestic infrastructure for harnessing renewable energy. This progress is evident from the fact that by 2030, India will be able to harness 500 GW of renewable sources, as per the report of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India. This demonstrates India's commitment to harnessing clean energy. Similarly, a recent report published by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy highlights that the installed capacity of various sources of renewable energy is "Solar, 48.55 GW; Small Hydro, 4.83 GW; large hydro, 46.51 GW; biopower, 10.62GW; Nuclear, 6.7 GW".

A cursory survey of India's quest for harnessing renewable energy demonstrates that over the years, India has scaled up its renewable energy sector. In this regard, it is pertinent to highlight that India started its journey to acquire renewable energy by diversifying into the nuclear energy sector in 1945 when the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) was established. It is pertinent to highlight that in 1957, the Atomic Energy Research Centre came up and was later renamed the Bhabha Atomic Energy Research Centre (BARC) in 1967. Over the years, India has made a quantum in harnessing nuclear energy the commissioning of the first civilian nuclear reactor, Apsara, as the BARC website suggests, in 1957.

The two recent wars — the Russia-Ukraine War as well as the Israel-Hamas War — as well as sanctions on Iran and Russia have had much impact on global energy geopolitics. Contrary to expectations, the above-mentioned wars have also demonstrated the vulnerability of developed countries in terms of accessing energy, especially those in the advanced Global North, like European countries, which are facing major challenges due to the wars. In this regard, it may be added that the Red Sea chokepoint crisis has further aggravated the global energy crisis. Some of the aforementioned geopolitical crises have demonstrated that many advanced European countries were ill-prepared to face the recent crisis, thus putting stress on their access to energy. However, Global South countries have also faced challenges equally due to the above-mentioned wars. What needs to be underlined is that Global South countries are in a precarious position due to the non-availability of energy, which has aggravated other crises, including food and related crises. The reason for identifying the vulnerability of the Global North and Global South in the present geopolitical crisis is to locate how the energy crisis affects the accessibility of energy. In this context, one must emphasize the importance of renewable energy discourses. It is pertinent to highlight how India provides a leadership role to the global community, particularly to the Global South, in addressing the issues of the energy crisis by initiating a host of renewable energy initiatives.

Three important issues need to be addressed while discussing India's role in the global renewable energy discourses. These are: India's initiative with regard to the renewable energy sector. How India's policy towards the renewable energy sector will provide a model for the Global South countries in particular and Global North in general in addressing the crisis. To assess India's contribution to global discourses. on the renewable energy sector. These three above-mentioned vectors will provide a blueprint.



Muizzu's estranged political mentor

The third one is due to depart in May, all of them being replaced by civilian 'technical personnel'. The Indian acceptance of the Muizzu diktat with grace and dignity did ensure that the new President had nothing to fear from India or be suspicious about the larger Ocean neighbour in the north. Muizzu's estranged political mentor and jailed former President Abdulla Yameen had injected those unnecessary and unjustified fears and suspicions into the bilateral discourse with his 'India Military Out' request in the closing months of his presidency in 2018. Barring India's regional adversary China's uni-

lateral declaration that they would defend Maldives' 'sovereignty and territorial integrity in case of external threats', there was nothing to suggest that either India or any other nation or force was threatening the archipelago-nation at the time — or, even in the past six years since Yameen lost the presidential polls of 2018. Yet, after losing power and leaving without a cause, to take on the successor government of President Ibrahim Solih of the rival Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), Yameen launched the by-now-infamous 'India Out/India Military Out' campaign, often confusing his goal and pur-

pose. In the end, the protests withered away, yet, Yameen's coinage became a political burden for his estranged aide Muizzu, who needed some handle to off-load the same, once elected to power. In more ways than one, New Delhi's quiet acceptance of Muizzu's election (unlike perceived an propagated by some in Maldives) and also the ready acceptance of his request for withdrawing the military personnel engaged exclusively in urgent evacuations during medical emergencies and natural disasters showed how matured nations and governments handle situ-

ations of the kind — without allowing it to go out of hands. All of it was only a continuation of the way India rushed aid to lil' Maldivian brother at the height of the unprecedented world-wide Covid crisis — before and after — when New Delhi pumped massive funds into infrastructure and massive development projects in the country. Long before the present, India, in another era had rushed the Indian Air Force (IAF) to thwart a mercenary-led coup-bid in 1988 ('Operation Cactus'), and the Navy to for rescue, relief and restoration work after the 2004 'Asian tsunami).

Ukraine has already lost the war and it is time NATO pulled the plug

Those opposed, think that letting Ukraine join NATO while the war with Russia has raged on for over two years now, will likely provoke sharp and dangerous reactions from President Vladimir Putin. Besides, there is a growing perception that Ukraine has already lost the war and it is time NATO pulled the plug.

Placing NATO on Russia's doorstep with the inclusion of Ukraine, even though it cannot pay its way with a devastated economy, is a violation of previous understandings, according to Russia. It was one of the reasons why Russia went to war against Ukraine in the first place. The other was Ukraine's harsh treatment of Russian-speaking populations in the Donbas region bordering Russia. However, Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently told reporters in Brussels that 'Ukraine will become a member of NATO. Our purpose at the summit is to help build a bridge to that membership'. If Biden does not win the presidency in November, then this process of 'bridge' building will most likely not be pursued. Trump is certainly not in favour of molycodding Ukraine's security at the expense of Russia. Various member countries such as Poland that want Ukraine in



NATO may not find much purchase with Trump in the White House. Candidate Donald Trump has let it be known he will 'settle' the war in Ukraine, if elected to office, 'in 24 hours', without specifying how. His formula flies in the face of those in Europe and America who do not want to concede any Ukrainian territory to Russia. Trump favours ceding the territory claimed by Russia in the Donbas region.

and beyond. Others think this will encourage Russia to invade again but surely this can work both ways. There will have to be a massive international reconstruction effort in what remains of Ukraine after a settlement in any case. This means business for many. Nevertheless, the brightest hope of a swift end to the war in Ukraine is

Trump back in the saddle.

Similarly, Trump has a 2020 formula for ending the war in Gaza. He wants Jerusalem and the West Bank-occupied territories as part of Israel and simultaneously a Palestinian state established. Only America can make this happen. This solution is likely to be supported by the major Arab countries already drawn in by the Abraham Accords from Trump1.0. Trump's ideas on Iran, North Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, are not that different from those of Democrat President Joe Biden and the State Department. They will have to evolve after he comes to office of course. India will continue to be considered a strategic ally of the US in the South Asian region and as a

bulwark against Chinese hegemony. There will be more collaborations, joint ventures, American investment, and defence technology transfer. India is likely to rapidly gain from more manufacturing relocations from China. Trump and Narendra Modi also have a personal chemistry that will help. However, the IT industry may face challenges with visa restrictions on working in the US. Pakistan will probably receive less American support than it does at present with a Republican administration in office. It will most likely be clubbed with China strategically. American relations with Russia will proceed at a better pace, as Trump has no real quarrel with Putin, and Trump will withdraw all sanctions against Russia and encourage his western allies to do so. To some extent this will free Russia to forge better ties with the West, instead of being limited to a Chinese embrace. The presumptive Republican Party nominee Donald Trump, is inching ever closer to the US presidency as his legal challenges melt away. Polls show him ahead of President Joe Biden. Even critics who think it will be a close election give Trump a 50-50 chance right now. NATO in Europe, much closer to the war in Ukraine

than the US across the Atlantic, is scrambling to mobilise resources to 'Trump-proof' themselves in anticipation. Trump has recently said Russia can do 'what the hell it likes' to any European country that does not pay its share in NATO and its war support to Ukraine. Europe realises it needs to think much beyond Ukraine going forward because Trump's transactional and quid-pro-quo style will not treat their security as guaranteed by Uncle Sam. Finland, for example, has just ordered 64 F-35A fighter jets from the US and has decided to double artillery shell production.

The outgoing NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, is drumming up support for the now 32 member-country NATO to establish a new five-year, 100-billion-euro fund for the battle in Ukraine. But many in Europe and America realise that Ukraine is militarily unequal, finding it difficult to find more conscripts let alone trained soldiers and that there is massive corruption in addition to gross incompetence. Twenty of the 32 member-NATO have set a target of spending 2 per cent of GDP for defence this year as called for earlier. But Trump says NATO security guarantees would only apply to those countries that actually

Celebrating Indian cinema on French Riviera

The famed seaside resort filled with the faint licorice smell of mimosa saw the birth of Italian neo-realism with the screening of Rome Open City by Roberto Rossellini. The festival brought some of the best films from around the world, including Jean Cocteau's Beauty and the Beast, Alfred Hitchcock's Notorious, and Gilda by Charles Cukor. Among the thousand delegates, a young man born in the distant town of Gurdaspur, India, was in Cannes to screen his directorial debut, Neecha Nagar. Chetan Anand, the highly educated son of a lawyer, had no previous experience in cinema or family in the film industry. For his debut film, written by Hayatullah Ansari with dialogues by KA Abbas, he cast his wife Uma Anand along

with Kamini Kaushal, Rafiq Anwar, Rafi Peer, and a much younger Zohra Sehgal. The music for the film was composed by sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar. The film that effectively used the expressionist montage technique to portray the gulf between the rich and the poor appealed to the jury at Cannes. Chetan Anand's Neecha Nagar became the first Indian film to be honoured at Cannes, sharing the top prize, the Grand Prix du Festival International du Film. Inspired by the success of Neecha Nagar at Cannes, a young Indian advertising executive, Satyajit Ray, wrote a letter to Chetan Anand saying that he was making his own first film. Another aspiring filmmaker who saw the film during its

limited screenings in India was Mrinal Sen. In 1956, towards the end of the Cannes Film Festival, an unknown Indian film was scheduled to be screened at midnight. It was titled 'Pather Panchali' and was the debut film of Satyajit Ray. Pather Panchali's journey from Calcutta to Cannes was fraught with political shenanigans. Ultimately, the direct intervention of the Prime Minister's office enabled the print to reach the projection room at the Palais de Festival in Cannes as India's official entry. However, the national award-winning film had arrived in Cannes starved of any advance publicity and the filmmaker was not present. Ray later recalled, "I had no means of going, so I stayed back."

Israel's retaliation against Iran has taken place

US media outlet Axios, Biden apparently told Netanyahu, "You got a win. Take the win." The US is apparently organizing a "diplomatic response" along with other G7 nations that is likely to involve fresh sanctions on Iran's missile and drone programmes. US secretary of state Antony Blinken, according to Axios, has said that "strength and wisdom must be the two sides of the same coin" in a veiled message to Israel. Germany and the UK have sent their foreign ministers Annalena Baerbock and David Cameron, respectively, to Israel to plead with Netanyahu not to retaliate. The result of this coordinated western pressure on Israel, so far, has been poor. Israel is reserving its right to strike back at Iran. Netanyahu flatly told the visiting German and British ministers that Israel will make its "own decisions" and "do everything necessary to defend itself." Israel's defence minister Yoav Gallant has told his American counterpart, Lloyd Austin, that Israel has "no option but to respond" while the Jewish state's military chief has said that the inevitable response will come at a place and time of Israel's choosing. Israel's 'war cabinet' is meeting again to decide on the modalities of response, and according to Jerusalem Post, an Israeli media

outlet, the country has already decided on the type but not the timing of the counter-strike on Iran. From the outside, all this may seem a little mystifying.

After all, Israel's air and missile defence system, with a large degree of help from a consortium of partners including the US, the UK, France and even Jordan managed to thwart 99 per cent of the Iranian projectiles.

Why can't Israel 'show restraint' when the combined West, led by Israel's staunch ally America, is imploring it to do so? India, too, has urged an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to the path of diplomacy. There are two reasons behind it. One, it is a little misleading to assume that Iran's attack on Israel was "symbolic". Iran's barrage of cheap drones and missiles along with its prompt signals of de-escalation were carefully calibrated to serve the twin purposes of projecting strength, reassuring its regional proxies as well as avoid a stinging retaliation from the Jewish state, and by extension, the United States.

Iran was telling Israel that the Jewish state (or the US) can no longer target its military, militias, or assets on its soil or in the region without any costs. The April 13 attack was a response to a purported Israeli airstrike on Iranian

embassy compound in Damascus on April 1 in which top Revolutionary Guard commanders were eliminated. Therefore, it can be said that Iran was trying to establish a 'new normal' by moving away from relying solely on terrorist proxies such as Hezbollah or Hamas and shifting from asymmetric warfare to direct confrontation. Financial Times quotes Ahmad Dastmalchian, Iran's former ambassador to Lebanon, as saying that the attack on Israel "opened a new chapter in Iran's defence policy" and represented a "paradigm shift from strategic patience to a multi-layered defence".

That's why even though Iran had expressed its intention well in advance with Washington, capitals in West Asia and even India (refer to MEA's travel advisory to Israel and Iran on 12 April, one day before the missile strikes took place, and had swiftly announced, post the air offensive, that Iranian objectives have all been met and "the matter can be deemed concluded", Israel still gets to have its say. It's all about deterrence. It is important for Israel, long accustomed to carry out preemptive strikes on Iranian territory or in the region targeting Iranian military officers, allied militias or terrorist proxies, to reestablish deterrence. I

Toyota Kirloskar Motor Unveils "T GLOSS": A Comprehensive Car Detailing Solution

SONIPAT/PANIPAT: In line with its 'customer-first' philosophy, Toyota Kirloskar Motor Pvt. Ltd. (TKM) today announced the launch of its revolutionary car care brand, "T GLOSS", marking the brand's foray into the world of car detailing. In response to the rapidly increasing demand for high quality and reliable car detailing services among customers in India, TKM is set to redefine the car care industry with its comprehensive range of solutions tailored specifically for Toyota vehicles. Starting May 1, 2024, "T GLOSS" treatments will be offered at every authorised Toyota dealership in India. This provides customers with convenient access to quality car care solutions delivered in a highly professional manner, ensuring a delightful ownership experience. As an industry first by any car maker, under the "T GLOSS" brand, TKM will offer a wide



array of services curated to enhance a vehicle's appearance, both inside and out. This includes ceramic coating, underbody coating, silencer coating, and internal panel protection. These treatments are not only aimed at enhancing the aesthetic appeal of vehicles but also offers certain degree of protection against environmental elements. Customers can also avail comprehensive services such as interior enrichment and exterior beautification services that breathe new life into the car, revitalizing its aesthetic appeal and ensuring it looks as good as

new. Additionally, for the well-being of the passengers, "T GLOSS" services go beyond the surface with AC duct cleaning and evaporator cleaning, contributing to an immaculate ambiance, promoting a healthier driving environment. All the services are meticulously designed to rejuvenate the interiors and exteriors of vehicles, providing a renewed sense of pride and satisfaction to Toyota owners. Speaking on the initiative, Mr. Sabari Manohar - Vice President, Sales-Service-Used Car Business, Toyota Kirloskar

Bungle in Banswara: Why Congress is opposing its own man

BANSWARA: Known as Rajasthan's tribal heartland, Banswara likely stands out as the only constituency nationwide where Congress is campaigning against its party nominee, and in favour of a fledgling Bharat Adivasi Party (BAP). Internal conflicts within the grand old party, lack of coordination between its state and central units, and high command's hesitance compelled it to tie up with the five-month old BAP on the latter's terms. Congress' own candidate, Arvind Damor, remains in the fray as well. A similar scenario is

unfolding in the bypolls to the Bagidora seat, an assembly constituency under Banswara LS segment. Here, Congress workers are engaged in door-to-door campaigning for BAP candidate Jaikrishn Patel, opposing their own nominee Kapur Singh. Both seats go to polls on April 26. After defeat in the 2023 assembly elections, Congress initiated talks to form an alliance with BAP, a party that secured three seats in the tribal region. The talks hit a roadblock as BAP insisted on three LS seats — Udaipur, Banswara and Chittorgarh — for its can-

didates in exchange for backing Congress candidates in the remaining 22 parliamentary seats. Former CM Ashok Gehlot, state president Govind Singh Dotasra, Sachin Pilot and local office-bearers, sources said, were wary of a tie up with BAP, with a section labelling the tribal party as "ambitious". Congress decided to bet on four-term MLA and former cabinet minister Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya as its LS nominee from Banswara. and in the first week of Feb, the party's core committee in Banswara and Dungarpur endorsed his candidacy.

Election code no bar for govt to execute court orders: HC

Chandigarh: Punjab and Haryana HC has made it clear that the model code of conduct issued by the Election Commission is not a bar for governments in complying with orders passed by the HC. The HC clarified this as a few appointments, to be



made in compliance with court orders, had been halted by adminis-

trative heads of departments of states and Chandigarh UT, citing model code of conduct. "Therefore, it has become necessary to clarify that no code of conduct issued by the EC can be permitted to stand in the way of execution of the orders.

CAPSULES

Two more held in Punjab over firing at Salman home



MUMBAI: Crime branch Thursday arrested two men from Punjab for allegedly providing illegal firearms and cartridges to the two shooters who had fired at actor Salman Khan's Bandra residence, and also indicated an "international connection". Police also brought four witnesses from Bihar who are expected to provide statements before a magistrate, that could be relied on against the accused during the trial. The accused were identified as Subhash Chander (37) and Anuj Thapan (32), who are from jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's village. Police said Thapan has a criminal past and knows Bishnoi personally. According to police, the duo travelled to Mumbai, stayed with shooters Vikas Kumar Gupta and Sagar Kumar Pal, and provided them with the guns. Joint commissioner of police (crime) Lakhmi Gautam said, "We will be able to gather more information once they are in our custody."

PM Modi accepts Meloni's invite to G7 meet in Italy in June

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accepted the invitation of his Italian counterpart, Georgia Meloni, to attend the G7 Summit Outreach Sessions to be held in June in Puglia, Italy. PM Modi thanked Meloni for the invite when he called to greet her on Italy's Liberation Day, according to govt. The invitation, midway through Lok Sabha elections, is seen to be in line with the assessment in foreign capitals about Modi being the favourite for the contest. During the conversation, the two leaders



reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the strategic partnership and exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

The two PMs also discussed carrying forward the outcomes of India's G20 presidency, especially support for Global South, to the G7 Summit under Italy's presidency.

G7 Summit will take place on June 13-15, shortly after the outcome of Indian elections. Earlier in the day, MEA said a G7 invite had been received and that the matter was under consideration. "We know that the G7 meeting is to be held in Italy. We have received the invitation. But, at this point in time, it's a matter which is under consideration and we will come to know of details as and when we have more details to share with you, we will bring it up to you," said the MEA spokesperson.

A week long 'Mangalorean Food Festival' for food lovers starts from April 27

Chandigarh: Amidst the festive fervour of the month of Baisakhi, Chandigarh city, which is a melting pot of cultures and communities, is going to get yet another flavour in form of a vibrant South Indian food festival! The Mangalorean Food Festival is being organized at Hotel Mango Grove, Industrial Area, Phase 1 where our food lovers will relish the exquisite and mouth watering Konkani & Kannada cuisines and remember this experience for their entire lives!



According to General Manager, Rajesh Chandel, "India is a paradise for food lovers, with so many options to choose from! In order to provide some new flavours to the

food lovers of this region, we are excited to host a Mangalorean Food Festival at our hotel to bring the vibrant culture of the Kannada region to the city." The food festival

starts from April 27 and lasts till May 4. This festival curates specially selected dishes from Chikmanglore, Udupi, Mangaluru and other traditional towns of Karnataka, using their local

ingredients. The festival is being spearheaded by Chef Sunil Kumar, who spent nearly two decades in various star rated properties in South India. He says- "In the process of putting the menu together, I was reminded of my time in Karnataka.

Three-day Akhand Paath started in the memory of martyred soldiers



Chandigarh: A three-day Akhand Paath commenced on the occasion of the 325th anniversary of Khalsa Sajna Diwas in memory of the Punjabi Sikh soldiers who were martyred for the British Army in Belgium during the First World War in 1914. This Paath is being organized at the In Flanders Field Museum at Ypres, Belgium as well as at Gurudwara Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib, Sector 34, Chandigarh simultaneously where in a large number of

sangat, the relatives of the deceased soldiers along with the ex-servicemen also paid homage to the departed souls through this paath which is being organised by the efforts of Sikhya Seekers in Chandigarh. The Founder of Sikhya Seekers, Col Perminder Singh Randhawa said that it is a matter of great pride for Indian and Punjabi soldiers that even after almost 100 years of the First World War, deceased are being remembered through religious rituals on foreign soil. He

expressed his gratitude to the Museum Management for this heartfelt respect. In the First World War, about one and a half lakh Punjabi soldiers fought for the British Empire and Belgium against the combined central power of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. As a result, Belgium was saved from the occupation of German troops and in the end the Belgian faction of the Allied countries emerged victorious.

DUROPLY WELCOMES ITS VALUED DEALERS FOR THE NEW YEAR WITH 'SHUBHAARAMBH' WELCOME KIT, SYMBOLISING AUSPICIOUS BEGINNINGS AND GROWTH

New Delhi : Duroply, India's premium and most experienced among the leading plywood companies, welcomed its valued dealers to a brand new year with a 'Subhaarambh' welcome kit, symbolising auspicious beginnings and growth. Duroply honoured over 1,050 esteemed dealers nationwide with Subhaarambh Kit and Dealer Certificates. Subhaarambh Kit constituted a replica of the Sacred Ram Temple, epic Ram Charit Manas, and a Charan Paduka. Mr. Akhilesh Chitlangia, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Duroply, said, "Just as Lord Rama's life



exemplifies the virtues of integrity, resilience, and compassion, we at Duroply take inspiration from the teachings of Lord Rama in our endeavour of providing premium plywood to our esteemed customers. We practice integrity in our manufacturing process, thus demonstrating compassion for our employees, customers, and the environment. Our range of plywood,

blockboards, doors and laminates are resilient which ensures that the interiors of our esteemed customers last generations." He further added, "At Duroply, every day it is our endeavour to commit ourselves to the righteous path embodying timeless values of Lord Rama. We chose the contents of Subhaarambh Kit as a demonstration of our commitment to the

teachings of Lord Rama and his life journey." Esteemed dealers of Duroply share the same timeless values and virtues of Lord Rama and hence, were delighted to receive the Subhaarambh Kit, together with their 2024 - 25 Dealer Certificates. The replica of the sacred Ram temple, Ram Charit Manas and Charan Paduka serve as a tangible embodiment of Duroply's reverence for tradition and its dedication to upholding values of righteousness and integrity. Just as Lord Rama's teachings emphasize integrity and resilience, Duroply's products.

Probe Harni lake contract: Gujarat HC

Gujarat HC Thursday ordered an inquiry against the then Vadodara municipal commissioner for "illegally" awarding contract for Harni Motnath Lake development project, where 14 people, including 12 students and two teachers, died in a boat capsizing incident in Jan. The bench expressed its opinion that the then municipal commissioner was responsible for illegally granting contract to Kotia Projects for development of Harni Lake on a PPP model in 2015-16. HC asked the principal secretary of urban development dept to form a panel to find out the "role & responsibility of municipal commissioner instrumental in the grant of contract in favour of Kotia Projects." The inquiry will also determine the role and responsibility of other officials. The inquiry has to be completed within two months.

PM Modi's 'redistribution of wealth' attack: What Manmohan Singh had said in 2006



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Modi, in his past few election speeches, has been relentless in his attack against the Congress over its manifesto promise of a "nation-wide socio-economic and caste census." PM Modi has accused the grand-old party of having "plans to redistribute wealth".

The Prime Minister set the tone for this mega attack last Sunday at an election rally in Rajasthan where he linked Cong's manifesto plans with a 2006 statement of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on giving priority to minorities on nation's resources.

Citing Manmohan Singh's 2006 speech, PM Modi has claimed that Congress, if voted to power, will take away people's wealth and redistribute it among the Muslims. "Earlier, when their (Congress) government was in power, they had said that Muslims have the first right on the coun-

try's assets. This means to whom will this property be distributed? It will be distributed among those who have more children," PM Modi had said at the Rajasthan rally. Since then, the Prime Minister has repeated this charge at all his election rallies. "They have set their sights on your hard-earned money and property. Congress's shahzada' (prince) says if their gov't comes to power, they will investigate who earns how much and has how much property, how many vehicles, your fixed deposits. Not only this, their gov't will take over property and redistribute it. This is what their election manifesto is saying..." he said at a rally in Aligarh.

Reiterating his comments, PM Modi again on Monday said, "Your Mangalsutra will not be safe under Congress rule," adding that Congress and INDI alliance have their eyes on the people's earnings and property. He made similar allegations on Tuesday at a rally in Rajasthan. "I have put forth the truth before the country that Congress is hatching a deep conspiracy to snatch your wealth and distribute it among the 'select' people," he said. Reacting strongly to PM's onslaught, Congress lodged a complaint with the EC seeking cancellation of PM Modi's candidature and stating that "this is not a candidate who will be silenced by a simple censure".

Calling PM Modi a "serial offender", Congress said that he attacked the dignity of the Constitution by violating the principle of secularism which is part of the basic structure.

Bon voyage: Air India's Boeing 747, takes off last flight from Indian air base

NEW DELHI: Once known as Queen of skies, Air India Boeing 747 on Monday flew out of Mumbai's international airport. The aircraft which once ferried Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Prime Minister and VVIP's took its last flight from Mumbai base marking the end of an era. The plane was used for long international flights. The aircraft is off to Plainfield in US, where it will be dismantled and be stripped for parts. There are four Air India Boeing 747's, the last of which ceased operations four years back. Air India

received delivery of its first Boeing 747 aircrafts on March 22, 1971. The pilots while taking its final flight off Indian base performed a "Wing Wave" which is an aviation tradition for retiring or concluding flights. Airlines across the world are replacing the Boeing 747's with much better and more efficient jets. According to a report the four Boeing 747-400 airplanes have found a new owner - US-based AerSale, a supplier of aftermarket commercial jet engines and parts. The last flight of Air India 747's was in 2021, since then, they've been

parked at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. Nomadic Aviation Group managing partner Steven Giordano told: "A local team of Engineers from the Air India MRO facility and on-site technical representatives for Aersale (the purchaser) have been getting the aircraft ready for flight for several months with inspections, engine runs, and return-to-service actions. The aircraft have been de-registered and placed on the FAA (United States) registry. An FAA Designated Airworthiness.

New variant of medium-range missile tested

NEW DELHI: India on Tuesday tested the new variant of a medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM), which was conducted by the tri-Service Strategic Forces Command that handles the country's nuclear arsenal. Defence ministry said "user launch" by



SFC "has proven the operational capability"

of MRBM & "validated new technologies", without specifying the exact kind of missile it was. Sources said it was likely to be "land version" of B-05 or K-15 submarine-launched ballistic missile. Arihant, India's first nuclear-powered submarine is equipped.

NCBC calls Karnataka top babu on Muslim quota

NEW DELHI: National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) chairperson Hansraj Ahir has summoned Karnataka's chief secretary to explain the basis on which the entire Muslim community was included in the OBC category in the state even as BJP sharpened its charge of Muslim appeasement against Congress. While PM Narendra Modi accused Congress of trying to "snatch" the reservation rights of OBCs and give it to their "vote banks", Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath

said it was very unfortunate and an attempt at "Islamisation of India". "This is a part of despicable attempts at Islamisation of India and pushing it towards divisions. When the UPA gov't came to power, it made such attempts at that time too. BJP had carried out a massive agitation. So, be it Justice Verma committee report or the Sachar committee report, they were all attempts by Congress to loot the reservation of OBCs, SCs and STs," Adityanath said. NCBC has summoned

the Karnataka chief secretary and sought a detailed report on what basis the Muslim community as a whole was being treated as educationally and socially backward for the purpose of 4% reservation in education and appointments under category 2B. Moreover, the state gov't is providing reservation to 17 socially and educationally backward Muslim castes under category 1 and 19 backward and educationally backward Muslim castes under category 2A. The commission has sought survey reports from the state to under-

stand the basis for giving reservation to the Muslim community as a whole under category 2B. Ahir said replies received from the state. were "not satisfactory" and the commission was of the view that "the rights of actual backward classes are being taken away". The total quota in Karnataka for backward classes for admission in educational institutions and appointments to posts in state services as per the constitutional mandate is 32% across five categories.

BJP may bench Brij, Poonam & Jamyang

NEW DELHI: Three prominent BJP faces, including controversial Kaiserganj MP and former WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, Mumbai North Central MP Poonam Mahajan and her Ladakh counterpart Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, are likely to be benched. Party sources indicated that Singh's wife Ketki Devi Singh, who served as an MP from Gonda for two years (1996-98) could replace him as BJP nominee, although a final decision is on hold in view of the sexual assault case expected in the last week of the month. Sources



said although the former WFI president was adamant on contesting the polls again, he has been advised to pause his claim until a decision in the case lodged against him by woman wrestlers. Besides, sources argued, Ketki Devi's candidature would be seen as a boost to women leadership, one of the party's key poll planks.

A Delhi court last week deferred its order on framing of charges against Singh. Six women wrestlers have accused him of sexual harassment - an allegation he has denied vehemently. The matter was deferred after Singh moved an application before the court seeking further probe into reports of his presence at the WFI office

on September 7, 2022. He also said the prosecution's analysis of call detail records had shown that one incident of alleged sexual harassment took place on a day when he was not present in the country. However, the chances of Mahajan and Namgyal seem bleaker as per party sources, who attributed the likely exclusion to their "non-performance" as MPs and "negative feedback" from their constituencies. Polling on all three seats is scheduled in the fifth phase on May 20, for which last date to file nominations is May 3.

IIT graduates are landing salary packages below 10 lakh this year

MUMBAI/DELHI: The pursuit of high-paying jobs has hit a roadblock this placement season at the premium Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). With companies scaling back on hiring and offering lower salary packages, students at the tail-end are being offered annual packages below Rs 10 lakh. Organisations that would usually pick half-a-dozen students have picked one or two at best, forcing colleges to reach out to more companies. And many of those are offering annual compensation of Rs 10-15 lakh. Students who have bagged campus jobs at what they believe is a lower pay scale, are still in the market looking for better prospects on job portals and travelling cities to attend job fairs and interviews.



"The global economic slowdown has significantly impacted the campus placements for the 2024 graduating batch of IIT Indore. The reduced hiring numbers of recruiters compared to the previous year have resulted in a challenging placement season. To offset the impact, IIT Indore has taken early steps by tapping into alumni networks and has broadened its pool of potential employers, including PSUs," said Professor Suhas Joshi, director, IIT Indore. A student at IIT Bombay said, "Companies that till last year picked 5 to 8

students are picking 1 or 2 this year. Several are still not yet hired. From coaching classes to start-ups, some have recently been picked for salary packages of Rs 60,000 to Rs 80,000 in phase 2." Another student from an IIT-Kharagpur said, "Spectrum Technologies offered Rs 3.6 lakh for trainee engineers and Rs 6 lakh for trainee design engineers. Startoon Labs and Gem Machinery offered Rs 5.5 lakh annually. Skyroot offered Rs 5 lakh. Sri Chaitanya and Next Education offer Rs 4.8 to 6 lakh per annum."

'Blatant lie': Siddaramaiah slams PM, defends 4% Muslim quota

NEW DELHI: Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah on Wednesday criticised PM Narendra Modi for making "illegal allegations" against Congress regarding transfer reservation quota from backward classes to Muslims calling it a "blatant lie". "Prime Minister Modi's claim that the Congress has transferred the reservation quota from backward classes and Dalits to Muslims is a blatant lie," he said in a post on X. "It stems from ignorance but also indicative of his desperation born from a fear of defeat. No leader in the history of our country has ever demeaned the office of the Prime Minister to such a low level", he added.



Highlighting that the reservation for Muslims has been in place for the "past three decades", he said, "It's true that in Karnataka, Muslims have been included in the 2B category for backward classes. This is not something done now. based on the reports of the Backward Classes Commissions starting the L. G. Havanur in 1974. This reservation has been in place for the past three decades." Calling out PM Modi to "apologise to

nation", he said, "Being in a position of responsibility, Prime Minister Modi must either these irresponsible allegations with evidence or apologise to the nation." PM Modi said at a rally in Tonk Rajasthan that the Congress tried to extend reservation to Muslims outside of the Dalit quota, accusing the party of inventing a "deep conspiracy" to steal people's wealth and distribute it to a

"select" group. "As soon as the Congress formed the government at the Centre in 2004, one of the first things it did was to reduce the SC/ST reservation in Andhra Pradesh and give it to Muslims," PM Modi said. "Between 2004 and 2010, the Congress tried to implement Muslim reservation in Andhra Pradesh four times but due to legal hurdles and the awareness of the Supreme Court, it could not fulfil its intention," he added. Questioning PM Modi's claims, Siddaramaiah said, "Where has the Congress stated that it would take away reservations from backward classes and SC/STs.

CM Soren's wife Kalpana to contest bypoll from Gandey assembly seat

NEW DELHI: The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) announced on Thursday that Kalpana Soren, the wife of former chief minister Hemant Soren who is currently in jail, will be contesting the bypoll for the Gandey assembly seat. The seat, located in Giridih district, became vacant after JMM MLA Sarfaraz Ahmad resigned. Kalpana, who is a homemaker, holds both MTech and MBA degrees. She completed her schooling in Baripada, Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, and pursued her engineering and MBA education at different institutions in Bhubaneswar. Her entry into politics was marked by her speech at the JMM's 51st foundation day celebration in Giridih district on March 4. During her address, she alleged that a conspiracy had been hatched by opponents since the formation of the Hemant Soren-led coalition gov't.

CAPSULES

'Saale sahab kya karenge': Smriti Irani takes a dig on Rahul Gandhi amid buzz over Amethi candidacy

NEW DELHI: As the Congress delays its candidate announcement in Uttar Pradesh's Amethi, incumbent BJP MP Smriti Irani has targeted Rahul Gandhi and his brother-in-law Robert Vadra. Irani said that in her five years in office, she accomplished more for the constituency than Gandhi did in his 15-year tenure. These comments came after speculation stirred by Vadra's potential candidacy for the Amethi seat, traditionally hel by the Congress and won by Irani in 2019. Amethi is scheduled to vote on May 20 during the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha polls. In a jocular tone, Irani remarked to a gathering in Amethi, 'Jijaji ki nazar hai, saale sahab kya karenge. (brother-in-law is eyeing the seat, what will he (Rahul Gandhi) do?) There was a time when people travelling in buses would leave their handkerchief to mark their seat so that no one sits on it. Rahul Gandhi will also come to mark his seat with a handkerchief because his brother-in-law is eyeing this seat.' "Has this ever happened? Just 27 days left for the election, yet the Congress has not announced its candidate. Such arrogance. What I could achieve in five years for Amethi, Rahul Gandhi could not accomplish in 15," Irani added.



BJD list out: CM to contest for 6th term; Birla ex-exec for Lok Sabha

BHUBANESHWAR:

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik will seek re-election from Hinjili for a record sixth term, BJD announced Wednesday as it named candidates for 15 Lok Sabha and 72 assembly constituencies ahead of simultaneous polls in four phases from May 13 to June 1. BJD nominated Santrupt Mishra, former HR head of Aditya Birla Group, for Cuttack parliamentary seat. Santrupt joined BJD in Feb after opting for voluntary retirement from Aditya Birla Group, which donated more than Rs 250 crore in electoral bonds to the party. He was speculated to contest from Cuttack, after six-time MP Bhartruhari Mahtab resigned from BJD. Sources said Mahtab may seek re-election from Cuttack. Odisha comprises 21 Lok Sabha and 147 assembly seats. BJD has replaced 10 of its 15 LS candidates from its 2019 roster, including



6 sitting MPs. Mumbai's ex-CP Arup Patnaik pitted against Sambit Patra in Puri. A diverse line-up of candidates, including a former top cop, a doctor, a hockey player, and a software engineer, has been unveiled by BJD for LS and assembly polls. Former Mumbai police commissioner Arup Patnaik will contest from Puri against BJP's Sambit Patra. Patnaik, who lost the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in Bhubaneswar, aims to secure victory this time. BJD general secretary (organisation) Pranab Prakash Das has been nominated to contest against Union minister

Dharmendra Pradhan of BJP in Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat, setting the stage for a high-stakes political showdown. Das, a three-time MLA from Jajpur and former minister, enjoys close ties with Naveen and his key associate V K Pandian. Sambalpur has historically been a BJP stronghold. In 2019, BJP's Nitesh Ganga Deb defeated BJD's Nalini Pradhan. Manmath Routray, son of Congress veteran Suresh Routray, joined BJD and will contest from Bhubaneswar. His political debut is anticipated to leverage his father's influence in Jatani, a key constituency.

FM: Don't have money to fight Lok Sabha polls

NEW DELHI: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Wednesday she had decided against contesting the Lok Sabha elections from Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh as she lacked funds to fight polls and may not meet the 'winnability criteria' in the two states. "The party did ask me but after thinking over it for a week or 10 days, I went back and said, 'maybe, not'... I don't have the kind of money to contest. I also have a problem because, whether it is Andhra or Tamil Nadu, it's also going to be a question of... are you from this community or are you

from that religion," she said while responding to a question at the Times Now Summit 2024. She said BJP president JP Nadda had suggested that she could contest from one of the two states. When asked how the finance minister didn't have funds, she said, "My salary, my earnings, and my savings are mine and not the Consolidated Fund of India". Several ministers in Modi's cabinet, such as Dharmendra Pradhan, Piyush Goyal and Bhupender Yadav, who are from the Rajya Sabha, are in the fray for a Lok Sabha seat this time. Sitharaman said the party was confident

of achieving the target of 370 seats set by PM Modi. and was working towards that goal. "PM has set the target. We will strive for it. He is confident that people have seen what this govt has given," she said, adding that the Modi govt has provided stability, a period of no strife, no corruption, free food and investment in creating assets that will last 100 years. "Every section has seen visible development happening. The way people respond to him, these aren't a mobilised crowd. All of us are confident that there is resonance."

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance maintains industry-leading claim settlement ratio

HISAR/KARNAL: Life insurance is an essential component of financial planning, providing financial security to the family and/or dependents. It is a promise made by the company to ensure the financial well-being of the family in case of untimely

demise of the policyholder. It is a tool to alleviate the financial distress caused by the loss of a loved one. Claims are the moment of truth for the industry and therefore one must purchase a policy from a brand they trust. Evaluating the claims

settlement ratio and the average time taken to settle a claim can be a good indicator of a customer-friendly life insurer. The turnaround time too is critical as it ensures that the beneficiaries receive the claim proceeds quickly. owever.

CAPSULES

Top court orders CBI probe into Manipur woman's 2013 murder that's still unsolved

Supreme Court on Wednesday said unresolved crimes tend to erode public trust in institutions, which have been established for maintaining law and order, and ordered a CBI probe into the death of a 25-year-old Manipuri woman 11 years ago that has remained unsolved till date, reported. Delhi Police have failed to bring to light the circumstances that led to the death of the woman in her rented house in south Delhi in 2013. She was working in a call centre at Delhi. A bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and Sudhanshu Dhulia passed the order on a plea filed by the family of the deceased seeking probe by CBI as Delhi Police failed to catch the killer and accused the cops of shielding the accused. The bench said, "...Criminal investigation must be both fair and effective. We say nothing on the fairness of the investigation... but the fact that it has been ineffective is self-evident. The kith and kin of the deceased who live far away in Manipur have a logistical problem while approaching authorities in Delhi, yet they have their hope alive, and have shown trust and confidence in this system. We are therefore of the considered view that this case needs to be handed over to CBI for a proper investigation and also to remove any doubts in the minds of the appellants, and to bring the real culprits to justice." The court noted that the woman's death was not a case of suicide as the crime scene had blood spattered on the floor and the bed sheet was completely drenched in blood. "It appears to be a homicidal death and therefore the culprits must be apprehended," the bench added.

Delightful Eight: Coming Soon, Octopus Theme Park In Rohini

New Delhi: To arouse curiosity among children about marine life, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) plans to develop an octopus theme park in Rohini. The civic body started the process for inviting tender on Wednesday and is looking to complete the Rs 2.5-crore project by the end of this year. The park will be built on 3.24 acres of land in Sector 21. The central attraction will be a 22-foot-high, 3-metre-wide replica of a colourful octopus, its 1.45-metre-long tenta-

cles spread out. The structure will welcome visitors at the entrance of the park and children can climb it using stairs constructed next to the tentacles. "Next to the replica, there will be slides for recreational purposes and artificial grass will be placed for children's safety. There will also be a provision for stone climbing and rope climbing," said an official. The initiative aims to motivate children to spend time in parks rather than gadgets for recreation, he

added. Around the structure of the octopus will be a dark blue rubberised floor divided into six parts, each with a provision for modern playing equipment. "As part of the project, octopus-shaped swings and seating areas or gazebos in five places will be developed. There will be 3D sculptures as well to attract children," said the official. The civic body also plans to develop an open amphitheatre on one side of the park. where people can sit

and relax. "We aim to utilise the place for holding events and programmes. It will be surrounded by a 3-metre-wide pathway and people will be able to reach the place easily," said the official. MCD will plant indigenous saplings of trees and a variety of flowering plants and shrubs to ensure greenery, he added. The civic body also started work recently on developing an insect theme park in Rohini's Sector 23, which would have swings.

32-year-old restaurateur shot in NE Delhi, no arrests yet

New Delhi: A 32-year-old restaurant owner died on Tuesday after a group of unidentified assailants fired on him while he was returning home on his motorcycle in northeast district's Usmanpur area. No arrest has been made so far, police said on Wednesday.

In a suspected case of personal enmity, multiple rounds were fired at victim Sanjay, who was pierced by at least five bullets during the attack, a senior police officer said, adding that the deceased, a resident of New Usmanpur,



owned restaurant 'Goa Bar' in the locality. Police received information about the shooting incident during the wee hours of Tuesday. "The complainant stated that he found his brother bleeding with multiple

bullet injuries and rushed him to the hospital where he was declared dead on arrival. The victim sustained injuries on his head, shoulder, elbow and abdomen area." said Joy Tirkey, DCP

(north-east).

A police team rushed to the spot and found seven empty shells, four lead pieces and one live round of 7.65 mm there, said DCP Tirkey. A case was registered under relevant sections of murder and the Arms Act. During investigation it was found that Sanjay was allegedly involved in a murder. "He along with his three associates had murdered a resident of the same locality a few months back and it is suspected personal enmity may be the motivation behind.

MP HC grants protection to teen live-in couple but advises caution on hardships

INDORE: While granting protection to a live-in couple, both 19-year-olds, Madhya Pradesh HC added a word of caution about the hardships and complications youngsters may face while getting into relationships so early in life, away from their families.



Justice Subodh Abhyankar, in an order dated March 14, observed that the petitioners were adults and had exercised free will in staying together against the wishes of their families. HC directed police to ensure the couple's protection, noting: "This court is inclined to allow the present petition... as he is a major and is entitled to reside as per his own will, and if he so decides, his choice

needs to be protected from external forces." Justice Abhyankar added: "Having held so, this court must record its concern about the choices youngsters are making these days... It must be remembered that even though certain rights have been conferred by the Constitution, it is not necessary to enjoy, and enforce them as well." "India is not a country where the State provides any allowance to the unemployed ones,

No road, no vote, says village in Uttarakhand bordering China

DEHRADUN: Nestled near the border areas of Chamoli district in the Garhwal Himalayas 6,000 ft above sea level, Dumak village, housing around 250 voters, finds itself entangled in an impasse ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. The crux of the matter? A 17-year-old promise of a road that remains unfinished leading voters here to boycott polls. The over 32-km road project,



under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), started back in 2007-08.

Villagers say that till now, around 50% of the road has been constructed by spending at least Rs 15 crore. Chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar, who was then election commissioner, had trekked to Dumak village before the 2022 state polls and soon after that, the poll panel decided to double the honorarium of polling officials tasked with reaching remote polling stations.

Peak electricity demand for MSEDCL crossed 25000 MW on Wednesday

MUMBAI: The MSEDCL peak power demand crossed 25000 MW for the first time this year on Wednesday, indicating that several interior regions in the state were witnessing high day temperatures. MSEDCL in a huge purchase by the state utility, bought 10385 MW electricity from the power exchange at pre-



vail market prices to cater to the peak demand. The peak demand in Mumbai hovered between 3400 MW and 3500 MW

while the overall across state also touched a new high this year at 28500 MW. After being at an all time low for seven months, the

BEST fleet finally crossed the 3000 mark on Wednesday as new buses arrived in the fleet - taking the fleet to 3008 buses. in Mumbai. A senior official said that the undertaking expects to increase the fleet size to 3500 in the next 3 months -- catering to the demand from 35 lakh daily,

200 waterholes in Asola to help wildlife battle the heat

New Delhi: With the rising heat, the forest department has decided to dig up around 200 waterholes across Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary. According to forest officials, the waterholes will be filled artificially with treated water or with water from Neeli Jheel. With almost all small and big ponds inside the sanctuary running dry and natural streams without water, over 20 species in the area will rely on the waterholes, which will also discourage their migration in search of water, they said. "We have recognised the areas where the waterholes will be created and they cover almost all regions of the sanctuary. They will be filled with the help of small tankers. As the heat is on the rise, we will begin the work soon as part of our conservation plan," said an official at Asola.

Public Diplomacy Forum Commemorates 17th edition of International Women's Day, Recognizes Women Achievers



New Delhi: Central Delhi became the focal point as the Public Diplomacy Forum orchestrated a vibrant celebration in honour of the 17th edition of International Women's Day. Embracing the theme of "Count Her In: Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress" for this year, women from diverse sectors were lauded for their outstanding contributions. The distinguished Guests of Honour were K.J. Alphons, Former MOS Electronics & IT and Tourism & Culture, Smt. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Dr. Sachchadinand MS I G N C A . , P a r i d h i Sharma, played a significant role in hosting the afternoon festivities, while Dr. Aruna Abhey Oswal was the co-host for the event. Ratan Kaul, Founder President of the Public Diplomacy Forum, Festival

Director of the Inkpot India Conclave, and Senior Advisor to the Indo-American Friendship Association, expressed, "The event aimed to inspire, motivate, and empower women by acknowledging their accomplishments. Over the years, distinguished international icons in visual arts, performing arts, international diplomacy, media, and political leadership have graced this event as special guests." Among the esteemed personalities honored were Yuvrani Ritu Singh of Jammu and Kashmir, Arunima Kukreja, Anuradha Prasad,

Manjari Mishra, Varuna Anand, Radhika Bharatram, Tulsika Kumar, Aditi Maheshwari, and Richa Anirudh, among others. It is noteworthy that the Public Diplomacy Forum, as a civil society organization, has a tradition of hosting meaningful and socially and politically relevant projects, programs, and seminars. In our increasingly globalized world, civil society organizations like the Public Diplomacy Forum are indispensable partners for international efforts at the country level. The Public Diplomacy forum has positioned.

Strengthens its commitment to providing equal work opportunities in 9 states through this initiative

KARNAL: Amazon India today announced the launch of Women in Night Shifts (WINS) at one of its large Sort Centre in Haryana. In addition to Amazon's existing initiatives, WINS is designed to provide a safe and supportive work environment for women, ensuring equal opportunities for both men and women to work in various shifts, and championing inclusivity for all. In some states in India, regulations prohibit the employment of women in night shifts in warehousing operations facilities primarily stemming from concerns about women's safety and wellbeing. Therefore, safety, security, and wellbeing take centre stage to enable the WINS initiative. Amazon India has actively engaged with state governments to advocate for equal work opportunity for all. Through dedicated efforts and collaboration with authorities, the company has successfully enabled night shift operations for women across select sites in

Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Punjab, and now, in Haryana. "We believe in creating equal opportunities and addressing barriers that women face in the workplace and are thankful to the government for their support in enabling women to work in night shifts," said Liju Thomas, Director of HR, India Operations, Amazon India. "The launch of WINS reiterates our commitment to promoting gender equality and nurturing a safe work environment for our employees and associates. We prioritize the safety and wellbeing of our associates offering comprehensive measures, such as transportation facilities, and enhanced security arrangements for those working in night shifts. We intend to extend this initiative to other sites in Haryana, reinforcing our commitment to a diverse and secure work environment." Amazon has implemented various

measures aimed at enhancing the safety and well-being of its associates. These measures include improved facility lighting, provision of escorted pick-up and drop services, running gender sensitization trainings, deployment of female staff in supervisory and support roles, and conducting sessions with safety experts to address the unique challenges associated with working in night shifts. "We commend Amazon India for championing equal opportunity in the workplace and providing women the opportunity to work in all shifts in their operations. Government of Haryana has diligently worked to enact policies enabling women to access equal work opportunities, fostering a more inclusive and equitable workforce. These efforts are a significant stride towards gender equality and workplace safety." Shri Dushyant Chautala, Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Haryana.

CAPSULES

NCW chairperson leads delegation to Kolkata amidst unrest in Sandeshkhali

KOLKATA: A delegation led by the National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma has left for Kolkata ahead of her Sandeshkhali visit. The area has been witnessing unrest for over 10 days as women protestors seek justice against alleged atrocities committed by TMC leader Sheikh Shajahan and his aides. Speaking to ANI, the NCW chief expressed her concern about the injustice done to women and her intention to visit every street and talk to the women to assure them of her support. During her visit, she plans to meet the governor of West Bengal and later meet President Droupadi Murmu. Rekha Sharma stated, "Very disturbing news is coming from Sandeshkhali. My member went to investigate but could not meet many victims due to the police. So I am going. I have spoken to the victims, and I want them to get full justice. So I will go myself. I will meet the directorate general of police and the local police there. A lot of injustice has been done to women, and I want to go to every street and talk to all the women and assure them that I stand with them so that they can have the courage to come forward and speak up. I will also take action and meet the governor. When I come back, I would like to meet the President." Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla criticized West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee for her handling of the situation in Sandeshkhali. Poonawalla expressed his disappointment with Banerjee's statements, calling them insulting and obnoxious.

Hyundai Verna and Royal Enfield Himalayan Win Top Honours at car & bike Awards 2024

NEW DELHI : The 2024 car&bike Awards were held at Sofitel BKC, Mumbai on February 27th, 2024. In its 19th edition, celebrating the best cars and bikes to be launched in calendar year 2023, Hyundai's all-new sedan Verna and Royal Enfield's adventure bike, the new Himalayan emerged with maximum scores. A 7-member jury, each for cars and bikes, consisting of senior automotive journalists from carandbike.com editorial team, and external automotive experts, voted in this process. The winners



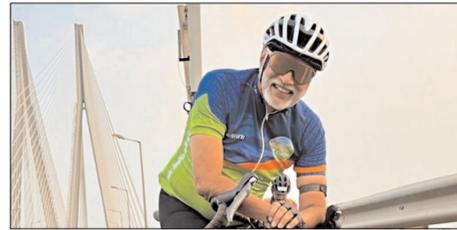
were chosen based on a thorough and elaborate assessment programme that included experiencing these vehicles on the Madras International Circuit over two days followed by a proprietary scoring and voting process validated and

audited by Divergent Insights, one of India's well-known, independent market research and analytics firms. The car&bike Awards are one of India's oldest and most reputed automotive awards. This year, more than 50 vehicles

were nominated for the awards. "The car&bike Awards recognizes and honours the best amongst all new cars and bikes launched in a calendar year. The year 2023 was a rather interesting one for the automotive industry with some path-breaking launches in the four-wheeler domain and more so in the two-wheeler space. Also, record sales numbers in a very tough year. To acknowledge the efforts of the automotive industry, this year's jurors had their work cut out to determine the best of the lot.

Ex-Intel India head Avtar Saini hit by cab while cycling in Navi Mumbai, dies

NAVI MUMBAI: Avtar Saini, a reputed chip designer, who was out on a ride with fellow cyclists, was knocked down and killed by a cab on Palm Beach Road in Nerul on Wednesday. The 68-year-old Saini was former Intel India country head, credited with working on Intel 386 and Intel 486 microprocessors. He went on to lead the design of the Pentium processor. The incident, coming less than a year since the death of runner Rajalakshmi Vijay on Worli seaface, is another reminder of how unfriendly roads are in



Mumbai for cyclists, pedestrians and runners. Saini, a resident of Chembur, was knocked down between Nerul junction and NRI-Seawoods signal at 5.50 am. He was taken to DY Patil Hospital, where he was declared brought dead. Members of an amateur cyclists group accompanying him said

when the cab rammed into Saini's bicycle from behind, he skidded on road and sustained grievous injuries. Due to the force of impact, the bicycle frame was wedged under the front wheels of the cab. Its driver attempted to escape, dragging the bicycle under his wheels for a

km. Passing motorists chased the cab and intercepted it near the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation headquarters at Belapur. Satish Kadam, inspector of NRI coastal police, said, "The accused cab driver, Hrishikesh Khade, has been booked for rash and negligent driving causing death. He has not been arrested but served with a notice under provision of CrPC directing him to cooperate in the probe and to remain present in court when a chargesheet is filed. Saini's body has been sent for postmortem."

BJP is getting stronger under the able leadership of BJP State President Nayab Singh Saini: Saurabh Chaudhary

NEW DELHI: During Sunday's IPL match between Lucknow Super Giants and Gujarat Titans in Lucknow, pace sensation Mayank Yadav suffered a side strain. After bowling just one over for Lucknow Super Giants, the 21-year-old had to leave the field.



He came to bowl in the fourth over of Titans' chase of 164 but could only manage to clock in excess of 140 kmph twice in the over before being attended to by the LSG physio and walking off the field. He gave away 13 runs in that over and did not reappear on the field afterward, despite LSG securing a 33-run victory over GT. Later, Lucknow all-rounder Krunal Pandya said the young pacer seemed alright after coming off the field. "I had a brief chat

(with Mayank) and he seemed okay, which is a positive. "Whatever conversation I have had, whatever we see, he has a good head on his shoulder. Really excited to see how his career pans out," said Krunal in the post-match presentation ceremony. This injury is a recurrence of the one that kept him on the benches during the Ranji Trophy season for Delhi. Mayank, who had previously battled with ankle and hamstring issues.

Presenting their much-anticipated "Renaissance: A Rebirth" Collection renowned fashion house Basanti

Jaipur: Presenting their much-anticipated "Renaissance: A Rebirth" Collection, renowned fashion house Basanti marked its debut at the Jaipur Times Fashion Week on March 10, 2024, hosted in the opulent setting of Jaipur Marriott. The event promised a dazzling display, spotlighting the brand's unwavering commitment to innovation and growth through their groundbreaking collection. The collection, divided into two distinctive chapters, skillfully captured the essence of Basanti's evolution and its profound understanding of the diverse lifestyles of modern Indian women. In the first chapter, titled "Prints and Resort Wear," the collection seamlessly transitioned into a captivating showcase of prints and resort wear.



Basanti, a longstanding pioneer in India's fast fashion landscape, crafted this segment to embody freedom and exploration. It offered a fusion of style and comfort tailored for the contemporary woman, who seeks both elegance and ease. The grand finale unfolded with the second chapter, focusing on "Glamour and Sophistication for the

Modern Bride." This segment was a tribute to the desires and aspirations of Basanti's clientele, particularly tailored for special occasions. Exuding glamour and sophistication, it was dedicated to the modern bride, presenting a celebration of accessible luxury that resonates with the spirit of the modern Indian woman. Utkarsh Ahuja,

the driving force behind Basanti's remarkable resurgence, expressed, "Basanti's creative process is deeply rooted in the preferences and evolving needs of our clients. The collection seamlessly blends style, quality, and accessibility, ensuring that each piece becomes a timeless wardrobe essential for the modern woman.

Punjab Kings' Shashank Singh gets platform to express himself

Finally, Shashank Singh is in the news for the right reasons. Last year, during the IPL auction in Dubai, Punjab Kings bid successfully for Shashank but then tried to persuade the auctioneer, Mallika Sagar, that it was a mixup of their part. 'A case of mistaken identity'. The hesitation on the part of Punjab Kings' owners transpired as there was another player by the name of 'Shashank Singh' who went under the hammer and was unsold. The 'other Shashank' was a Bengal player, while the one under the spotlight was Chhattisgarh batsman Shashank, who had played for Sunrisers Hyderabad and been a member of Rajasthan Royals and Delhi Daredevils squads in previous IPLs. The bid was complete and the auctioneer refused to reverse the process. As conjectures and theories started circulating on social media.