



## Jagatsinghpur Police rescued two Children with Kidnaper

Jagatsinghpur. Jagatsinghpur Police rescued two kidnapped Children with Kidnaper. In a Press- Meet SP said that, it was a case of revenge of Kidnaper upon the informat. Information Kajal Singh belongs to Langipali, Beheram pur of Ganjam district and she belongs to Banjaran catagory. She married Ganesh Singh of Balangir district and living as nomadic. Suddenly husband of Kajal Singh got marriage with another lady and shifted to Bihar. After departure of husband Kajal Singh was living with her family but her mother- in- law demanded to take back the male child of Kajal Singh. Some how Kajal Singh and

elder brother of her husband named Raja Singh came to Jagatsinghpur and stayed at Hatbazar, Jagatsinghpur. Raja Singh presented rupa Khadu and other articles to Kajal. But due to some dispute Raja Singh demanded gift articles back but Kajal refused to return back. Then Raja Singh shifted to Bus stand area and swiftly kidnapped both the child and fled away. He also demanded rupees 10000 to realise the childrens. As per complain of Kajal Singh Jagatsinghpur Police started investigation and found the kidnapper with two kidnapped child from Banapur area. Police will forward the accused to court.

## One arrested for pangolin e scale trade, Two more detained in ivory trade



Keonjhar : Keonjhar Forest Department seized. Pangolin scale from the house of Sunil Soren(48) of Amritpada village of Sadar police station, while raiding today.

Sunil was arrested along with other three in ivory trade yesterday.

During interrogation Sunil confessed to killing the wild animal.

According to forest department sources, he had hunted the pangolin in a forest near the village, eaten it and hid its scalp in his house for sale.

The accused Sunil told the Forest Department that it was a adult female pangolin.

The seized scalp is estimated

to weigh about 1 kg.

In other hand the Forest Department has detained two people today in connection with the ivory trade. They are identified as Geda Majhi (50) of Kondrapashi village of Sadar police station and Bibishan Munda (22) of Sarukudar village of Bamebari police station.

Forest officials interrogating them to gather more information regarding the hunting and ivory and other trade . When asked about this, Assistant Conservator of Forest Ashok Kumar Das said that the incident is under investigation. After the investigation, it will be known from where the ivory was brought and where the elephant was killed.

# The groom went to the bride's house, a unique wedding ceremony

Keonjhar : A unique wedding ceremony was seen in Chhamunda village of Telkoi block in Keonjhar district. This wedding ceremony took place yesterday.

Usually in Hindu weddings, the groom goes to the bride's house with a band, dances, sings and sounding crackers. There, the wedding ceremony is held according to the rituals and after the ceremony, the bride returns to the groom's house with the groom. Similarly, the bride's family gives them a dowry and



household items as per their efficiency.

According to the sources in this wedding, the

opposite tradition has been observed. Here, the bride went to the groom's house on Wednesday with the band procession. The wedding took place according to their tradition. After this, the bride returned to her house today with the groom. The people of the groom's house gave them a dowry and sent them off. Such a unique wedding ceremony has become a topic of discussion in the entire region.

Sources said that Basant Pradhan, son of

Panchu Pradhan of Chhamunda village, was fixed marries to Laxmi Dehuri, daughter of Raya Dehuri of Banspal block. The date was fixed for this. However, after discussion, the bride's family said the groom would come, get married and stay at the bride's house after the wedding. But Panchu Pradhan did not agree to this. Later, since Raya Dehuri did not have a son, both of them agreed that Basant would stay at the bride's house after the wedding.

## Tata Steel Foundation Facilitates Foundation Stone laying for Infrastructure Initiatives in Dhenkanal

~ Hon'ble MP, Dhenkanal, Rudra Narayan Pani and Hon'ble MLA, Hindol, Simarani Nayak laid the stone for Classrooms at Degree Mahila College, Rasool and Cement Concrete Road at Shibapur

Meramandali, May 14, 2026: Tata Steel Foundation has facilitated the laying of foundation stones for two key community infrastructure initiatives in Dhenkanal district, aimed at strengthening educational infrastructure and improving rural connectivity. The projects include the construction of a four-classroom building for the proposed Degree Women's College at Rasool and a Cement Concrete (CC) road at Sibapur



village under Odapada block.

The foundation stones for both projects were laid by Rudra Narayan Pany, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Dhenkanal, and Simarani Nayak, Hon'ble

Member of Legislative Assembly, Hindol, in the presence of Dilip Kumar Sethi, Tehsildar, Hindol, Manas Naik, Sarpanch, Sibapur, Varun Sara, Vice Chairman, Hindol, Subhransu Shekhar Panda,

Chief Corporate Services, Tata Steel Meramandali and Kumar Saurabh, Unit Leader, TSF, local representatives, community members and officials. The classroom building at Hindol-Rasool is envisioned to strengthen access to higher education for girls in the region. The proposed college is expected to serve students from nearly 14 surrounding blocks and benefit around 160 students. The initiative aims to create a safe and conducive learning environment while encouraging greater participation of girls in higher education.

In another initiative, Tata Steel Foundation has supported the

construction of a CC road at Sibapur village under Sibapur Gram Panchayat in Odapada block. The road project is expected to benefit nearly 5,000 commuters, including students, patients, and residents.

The initiative is expected to facilitate safer movement of people and vehicles, improve drainage, and strengthen rural infrastructure to support socio-economic development in the area.

Through these initiatives, Tata Steel Foundation continues to work towards addressing critical community infrastructure needs and enhancing access to education and connectivity in rural Odisha.

## Boys Outshine Girls in CBSE Class 12 Results in Puri

Puri: Boys dominated the topper lists across several schools in the district as the CBSE Class 12 examination results were declared this year, with students posting impressive scores and bringing laurels to their institutions.

At Mothers Public School, Jitnarayan Pujapanda emerged as the Science stream topper with 95.8% marks (479/500), while Vishal Nayak secured the second position with 94.6% (473). Adyasha Priyadarshini Mishra

and Jigyasa Spain jointly bagged the third spot with 92.2% (463 marks each).

In the Commerce stream, Tanish Agrawal topped the school with 95% (475 marks). Shlok Sandeep Barik came second with 92.8% (464), followed by Jitesh Agrawal with 92.6% (463). Altogether, 16 students from the school scored above 90%. School president Pallavi Patnaik and principal Sagufta Parveen congratulated the successful

students on their performance.

Students of Kendriya Vidyalaya also delivered an outstanding performance. Shivprasad Mishra led the achievers' list with 97.8% (489 marks), the highest among students scoring above 90%.

Other top scorers included Priyanshu (95%), Ishika Agrawal (94%), Sai Arpita Rath (94%), Divyajyoti Mishra (93.8%), Aditya Narayan Senapati (93.6%), Kaushtubh Pradhan

(93%), Akshay Padhi (92.2%), Om Sai Kalyan (90.2%) and Ayush Dalai (88.6%).

In the Science stream, Priyanshu secured 478 marks (95.6%), while Somesh Mishra scored 471 (94.2%). Asmita Mahanti obtained 459 marks (91.8%), Jignesh Swarup scored 456 (91.2%), Shivprasad Sahu secured 453 (90.6%) and Reema Bharati Das scored 450 (90%).

Meanwhile, at St. Xavier's High School, Santosh Patnaik

topped the Commerce stream with 91.8%, while Snehashish Pratihari secured second place with 89.4%.

In the Science stream, Bhagyadhar Nayak topped with 94%, followed by Atita Abhishek Das with 92.3%, S S Panda with 91.5%, Sobhen Mahanti with 90.2% and Abhishek Rath with 90%.

In the Humanities stream, Shivangi Patnaik emerged as the topper with 90.8% marks.

## Police Mitra launched in khordha, enhance coordination between police and citizens.

Khordha-15/5-Khordha district police today officially launched the "Khordha Police Mitra" initiative along with the unveiling of its dedicated logo and citizen-assistance platform, marking a significant step towards strengthening police public partnership and promoting community oriented policing. The initiative aims to enhance coordination between police and citizens by providing instant access to essential police services through a technology-enabled and citizen-friendly platform. The service facilitates

prompt public assistance, encourages community participation in policing activities, and strengthens mutual trust and cooperation between the police and the community. As part of the initiative, citizens can access multiple police services including complaint registration, emergency assistance, mobile theft reporting senior citizen support, police station location services, feedback mechanisms, and other public assistance facilities through QR-based access and WhatsApp support. The newly

unveiled logo symbolizes unity, public trust, safety, responsiveness, and collaborative efforts between the police and the community. It reflects the commitment of khordha police towards transparent, accessible, professional, and people-centric policing. Speaking on the occasion, SP, Khordha Vivekananda Sharma, highlighted the importance of active public participation in maintaining peace, preventing crime, promoting awareness, and ensuring effective grievance redressal. He encouraged

citizens to actively associate with the "Police Mitra" initiative and work together with the police for building a safer and more secure society. The programme was conducted in the presence of IG, Police Central Range Dr. Satyajit Naik, along with senior police officers, public representatives, community members, students, media personnel, and other dignitaries. Khordha Police reiterated its commitment towards effective community policing and responsive public service delivery through this initiative.

## Another person gets 20 years in prison in a gang rape case, Earlier one get 20 years RI and 2 others are still absconding

Keonjhar : Keonjhar Fast Track Court Judge Bijay Kumar Mishra today sentenced a person to 20 years in prison and fined him Rs 10,000 in a gang-rape of a 16 year old minor girl. For nonpayment of the fine, the court ordered an additional 6 years in prison. The convicted person is Ramesh Naik (20) of Bamebari police station area. Earlier Pradeep Naik (25) was convicted and the other two involved in the incident are still absconding, and a non-bailable arrest warrant has been issued against them.

According to Special Public Prosecutor Patitapaban Nath, on February 13, 2021 the Child Line

of Banspal block received an information that a 16 year old girl, who was 7 months pregnant, was living in the house of a goat herder in Nayakot police station area. On the same day the Child Line rescued the victim and placed her in the Sakhi One Stop Center, District Headquarter Hospital, keonjhar. During the counseling, the center's director came to know that she was 7 years pregnant. The said victim was found to have been a victim of gang rape by multiple people.

In this regard, the center's director, Aishwarya Sanghamitra Das, gave a written complaint to the Nayakot police station on 13

July 2021. The police registered a case based on the complaint and conducted an investigation. During the investigation, evidence was found against Manu Pradhan, Pradeep Naik, Asadhu Pradhan and Ramesh Naik in this incident and a case was registered under POCSO Section 6.

The police arrested Pradeep and tried him in court. The other accused, Manu Pradhan, Asadhu Pradhan, are absconding. However, today the court passed the above sentence based on the statements of 20 witnesses and the police investigation report while hearing the case.

## Biswaranjan Juharsingh topped the state of odisha by scoring 99 percentage marks in CBSE 12th exam.science stream.

Khordha 15/5 : The students of Aryavart Ancient Academy (AAA) a leading educational institution in khordha, have achieved unprecedented success in the CBSE Class 12th annual exam results. The school's exam result was 100 percent, while 31 percent of the students scored 90 percent or above marks. The school's science student Biswaranjan Juharsingh topped the state of Odisha by scoring 99 percent marks in science stream, while E.Suman Patro, in the commerce stream, topped the school by scoring 94 percent marks. Biswaranjan Juhar Singh is the only son of Raghunath Juharsingh and Reena Rani Juharsingh, residents of Begunia



in khordha district. He recently successfully cleared the JEE-Main exam-2026 and aspires to serve the nation by becoming a dedicated and skilled engineer. Due to this unprecedented success of the students, the school organized a grand function in which the school's principa, Dr. Dipti Mayee

Mohanty felicitated the students with a Uttariya and a bouquet of flowers. Principal, Dr. Mahanty announced that the school will provide all kinds of assistance for Biswaranjan higher education. The academy focuses on a mix modern and pedagogy to prepare students for the future while

remaining connected to cultural roots. The institution provides a "day-cum-residential environment often showcasing high academic disciplines. The school's teachers, staffs, parents, media representatives and students were present in this felicitation function.

## Deputy CM holds review meeting on CSR fund investment by Industries operating in Paradip

Paradip - Odisha Deputy Chief Minister Paravati Parida came on a one-day visit to Paradip on Thursday. In the afternoon, he reached IFFCO and attended a review meeting of industrial companies operating in Paradip. He reviewed the proper utilization of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds of industrial companies. CSR and unit heads of industrial companies operating in Paradip participated in this meeting. Industry, Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Sampad Chandra Swain, Jagatsinghpur MP Bibhu Prasad Tarai, District



Planning Board Chairman and Jagatsinghpur MLA Amarendra Das, Balikuda-Erasma MLA Sarada Nayak played a prominent role in the program. Initially,

Deputy Chief Minister Paravati Parida was welcomed and felicitated at IFFCO under the leadership of BJP Paradip unit President Subrat Kumar Pradhan.

# MSJK Hospital: Expanding Healthcare Access in Rural Lanjigarh

Bhubaneswar 15 May 2026 : Kalahandi, a district in Odisha that was once associated with poverty and limited access to basic amenities, has witnessed a steady transformation in how essential medical services reach rural communities. At the centre of this shift is the Maa Santoshi Jankalyan (MSJK) Hospital, which has emerged as an important healthcare support centre for people living in the remote parts of Lanjigarh and surrounding areas.

For years, families in this region had to travel long distances to access even basic treatment facilities. Delayed medical care often worsened health conditions, especially for pregnant women,

children, elderly people, and those suffering from diseases prevalent in the area, such as malaria and filaria.

MSJK Hospital was established in the year 2000 to serve nearly 8,000 people across 70 villages in 4 Gram Panchayats. Its reach, however, expanded significantly after Vedanta partnered with the hospital in 2014. With the company's support, MSJK Hospital now caters to 120 villages across 12 Gram Panchayats, benefiting nearly 20,654 people annually. The hospital has helped improve access to quality medical care in one of Odisha's remotest regions, offering essential treatment and timely medical support to communities that

previously had limited access to healthcare. Located around 25 km from Lanjigarh, it remains a key healthcare centre for the Bankakundru region and beyond.

The impact is visible beyond numbers. Pregnant women, who earlier faced serious risks due to limited maternal care, now have access to specialised medical attention at the hospital. Children are able to avail of regular vaccinations and health check-ups. Patients suffering from malaria, diarrhoea, sickle cell anaemia and other illnesses can receive treatment closer to their homes.

"Earlier, it was very difficult for us to access medical care, and many had



to rely on traditional remedies or unregistered medical practitioners in the hope of curing our illnesses. The MSJK Hospital has been a true blessing for the region and helps keep us healthy and happy" said, Bharat Majhi, a resident of

Lanjigarh. Healthcare access has also moved beyond the hospital premises. Through Vedanta's Mobile Health Units, expert doctors and nurses are able to reach remote villages more easily, helping detect illnesses early and reducing the need for emergency hospitalisation. This has allowed many families to receive medical attention within their communities, eliminating the need for travelling long distances.

Emergency care has also improved through the introduction of ambulance support, helping ensure faster medical intervention in critical cases. Vedanta-supported initiatives linked

to maternal and community healthcare have also been recognised under the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matrutwa Abhiyan, underscoring the role such interventions play in rural healthcare.

Today, MSJK Hospital stands as a vital healthcare institution for rural Lanjigarh. From a modest facility serving a limited population, it has grown into a dependable medical support system for thousands of people across the region, with extensive support from Vedanta. This reflects how sustained partnerships and targeted interventions can help strengthen healthcare access in underserved communities.

# 60 Railway Employees Felicitated with Rail Seva Puraskar-2025



**Khurda :** Khurda Road Division celebrated the "70th Rail Seva Puraskar-2025" Award Ceremony at Railway Kalyan Mandap, Retang Colony, to honour the sincere efforts, dedication, and hard work of its employees. A total of 60 Railway employees of the Division were felicitated by Shri D. Sunil, Divisional Railway Manager, Khurda Road, for their outstanding performance and exemplary service.

Smt. Priyanka Jeevaraj, President, East Coast Railway Women's Welfare Organisation, Khurda Road, was present on the occasion along with Shri P.K. Behra, ADRM(OP), and Shri Rajdhari Yadav, ADRM (Infra), to encourage the awardees.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri D. Sunil congratulated all the awardees for their determination, dedication, and exceptional

commitment in fulfilling their responsibilities and achieving the targets set for the Division. He highlighted that Khurda Road Division secured four (04) Efficiency Shields in the Vishisht Railway Seva Puraskar-2025 organised by East Coast Railway.

Highlighting the achievements of the Division during the financial year 2025-26, Shri D. Sunil stated that Khurda Road Division ranked first among all Divisions in freight handling at terminals, including combined loading and unloading performance. He further informed that the Division secured the 3rd position in Indian Railways in terms of originating freight loading.

He added that, apart from enhancing passenger train services and passenger amenities, several important initiatives were undertaken during 2025-26, including the introduction of new trains such as the Amrit Bharat Express, redevelopment of stations under the Amrit Bharat Station

Scheme, and prioritised infrastructure development works across the Division.

During the ceremony, the Divisional Railway Manager felicitated meritorious Railway employees with the "Rail Seva Puraskar-2025" and urged all staff members to continue working with dedication to make Khurda Road Division one of the best Divisions in Indian Railways.

A colourful cultural programme was also organised during the occasion by Railway staff, children of Srijankunj, Utkal Public School, and Bharat Scouts & Guides, Khurda Road.

All Branch Officers and members of the East Coast Railway Women's Welfare Organisation, Khurda Road, were present during the function. The programme was coordinated by Shri Ponna Venkatesh, Sr. DPO, Khurda Road.

## Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Sarat Chandra Behera delivered the vote of thanks.

Among those present at the meeting were Puri Municipal Corporation Commissioner Sneha Arugula, Additional District Magistrate (Protocol) Nilamadhab Bhoi, Joint Commissioner of Puri Municipal Corporation Abhimanyu Behera, PKDA Secretary Dillip Kumar Maharana, Sub-Collector Raj Kishore Jena, Additional SP Sachin Patel, Deputy Collector Priyadarshini Mallik, Anushraba Gantayat, and several district-level officers.

Officials from various departments and representatives of different voluntary organizations also attended the meeting and offered valuable suggestions.

Deputy Director of Information and Public Relations Santosh Kumar Sethi conducted the proceedings of the meeting.

# ANM Students Felicitated for State-Level Excellence in Odisha

Puri: The results of the annual examination conducted by the Odisha Nurses and Midwives Examination Board (ONMEB) for ANM training centres across the State have been declared, bringing laurels to Puri district. Three students from the ANM Training Centre, Puri, secured top ranks at the State level, earning widespread appreciation across Odisha.

Continuing its remarkable academic performance, the institution had earlier secured the 3rd rank in Odisha in 2024, while in 2025 two students had achieved the 1st and 2nd positions respectively.

This year, Priyanka Priyadarshini Maharana secured the 1st position in the State with 94.7%, followed closely by Sabana Khatun with 94.6% and Rupali Jena with 94.5%, who secured the 2nd and



3rd positions respectively. Their achievement has brought pride and honour to both Puri district and Odisha.

On the occasion of the 206th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, the topper students and the Principal of the ANM Training Centre, Puri, were felicitated at a special programme organised by

the Directorate of Nursing and the National Health Mission (NHM), Odisha.

Later, during the annual function organised by the ANM Training Centre, Puri, the three meritorious students were honoured once again for their outstanding performance.

Principal Dr Nayana Kumari Samal congratulated the students and expressed

gratitude to all teachers and staff members for their dedication and support. She also thanked Lord Jagannath for blessing the institution to create such a record in Odisha.

Additional District Medical Officer (ADMO) Dr Binod Rath and DPM Shyam Sundar Tripathy were present during the felicitation ceremony.

## New Jagannath Road in Dire Condition Cracked Surface, Rising Accidents Trigger Concern

Puri: The condition of the New Jagannath Road connecting southern Odisha to Puri has become a matter of serious concern, with damaged stretches and deep potholes leading to frequent accidents and public outrage.

The road, constructed during the tenure of former Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik, was developed from Sharankul through Rameswar to Puri to reduce travel distance for devotees visiting the holy city of Puri from southern districts.

However, locals allege that nearly a five-kilometre stretch between Chupuring and Baku has deteriorated badly. Large cracks have appeared on the concrete surface, while the bitumen layer has peeled off in several places, creating dangerous potholes along the route.

Residents say two-wheeler riders are frequently losing balance after wheels get trapped in the damaged



portions of the road, resulting in serious injuries. Heavy vehicles too are reportedly facing difficulties due to large craters formed at several points on the road.

Villagers of Kanas block have repeatedly demanded immediate repair and maintenance of the Jagannath Road. Yet, they claim that officials responsible for the road infrastructure have failed to conduct proper inspections or initiate restoration work.

The road serves as a key

route for hundreds of pilgrims and commuters travelling to Puri from Berhampur, Balugaon, Nayagarh, Sharankul, Bhanjanagar, Daspalla and Khandapada. Devotees visiting the shrine of Lord Jagannath have expressed strong dissatisfaction over the deplorable condition of the road, alleging that the damaged stretch is not only causing inconvenience but also posing a serious threat to public safety.

## Admin Ordered Fuel Outlets to Maintain Minimum Reserve Stock

Keonjhar: While the fuel shortage became an issue across Odisha, the Keonjhar district administration directed all proprietors of retail outlets in the district to maintain a minimum reserve stock of petrol and diesel to meet emergency needs. This issue arises when fuel burns excessively, causing people difficulty in obtaining the required amount. Many fuel outlets refused to provide the required fuel, causing difficulties for people. Sources said the Chief Civil Supply Officer (CCSO), Keonjhar issued a letter on Friday to all fuel pumps in the district and directed to keep at least 2,000 litres of High-Speed Diesel (HSD) and 1,000 litres of Motor Spirit (MS/Petrol) in reserve at all times. The letter was addressed to proprietors of all retail outlets. According to sources, the district administration has taken steps to ensure the availability of petroleum products during emergency situations. The reserve stock is earmarked exclusively for emergency requirements and must not be exhausted during normal sales operations. The administration has also warned the fuel pump owners that action will be taken if any deviation from the directive will be made. "In view of the necessity to ensure an uninterrupted supply of petroleum products during the monsoon season emergency, the order was passed to maintain minimum stocks not for on going fuel crises. Kerosene outlets have also been ordered to keep about 2,000 liters in reserve," said Pabitra Mohan Sahu, CCSO, Keonjhar.

## Nine gets 7 years in jail for murder attempt.

Keonjhar : Keonjhar Assistant District Judge and Special Fast Track Court Judge Sucheta Kripalini today sentenced 9 people to 7 years in jail and fined them Rs 5,000 each, while hearing an attempt-to-murder case. The convicts have been identified as Sushant Kumar Patra (51), Himanshu Shekhar Patra (30), Mamitarani Patra (33), Sangram Keshari Patra (36), Mamata Patra (42), Suresh Chandra Patra (46), Brahmananda Patra (49), Benudhar Patra (74) and Biswamitra Patra (46). Two were acquitted due to lack of evidence.

According to the Government prosecutor Kedar Dash, on October 9, 2021, around 5 pm, Sambit Kumar Patra (aged 22 at the time) was returning home from Telkoi Bazaar when the above accused attacked him on the road in front of the school with deadly weapons due to a previous enmity and took Rs 1200, a gold chain, and a wristwatch. As a result, Sambit was seriously injured and bleeding. On receiving the information, his uncle Dhruba Charan Patra reached the spot and rescued him and he was first sent to Telkoi Community Health Center and then to Keonjhar District Head Hospital for treatment. Sambit's uncle Dhruba Charan Patra reported the incident to Telkoi Police Station on the 10th. Upon receiving the complaint, the police registered a case under various sections and arrested 11 people and forwarded them to court.

# Coordination Meeting of Voluntary Organizations Held

Puri: During the annual Rath Yatra, lakhs of devotees and pilgrims visit Puri. Various voluntary organizations provide different kinds of services to these devotees during the festival. District Collector Divya Jyoti Parida stated that such service is also a noble offering to Lord Jagannath.

A coordination meeting with voluntary organizations was organized today at the Town Hall by the district administration to ensure the smooth and disciplined conduct of the upcoming Rath Yatra. Presiding over the meeting, Collector Shri Parida appreciated the unique and commendable services rendered by volunteers during previous Rath Yatras. He



urged them to continue providing dedicated service during this year's festival as well.

He emphasized that voluntary organizations should establish their identity through sincere service and use their experience and expertise to assist in various aspects of the Lord's work. The Collector also clarified that applications from voluntary organizations

would be reviewed carefully, and those not performing proper service activities would not be granted permission.

Superintendent of Police Prateek Singh said that disciplined service during Rath Yatra is equivalent to serving the Lord Himself. He appealed to all volunteers engaged in various activities to remain committed to genuine service. At the

beginning of the meeting, Additional District Magistrate (Revenue) Dr. Sarat Chandra Mahapatra welcomed all participants and requested the volunteers to continue providing quality service as in previous years. He assured that the administration would extend full cooperation.

Organizations involved in providing food and drinking water were advised to reach

their allotted locations on time, place dustbins properly, maintain cleanliness in the areas they use, and regularly dispose of waste. They were also instructed to store garbage in large sacks and remove it after completion of service activities.

Participants observed that this is a sacred service activity and stressed the importance of mutual coordination and dedicated involvement from Snana Yatra to Niladri Bije.

Detailed discussions and suggestions were made regarding health services, ambulance facilities, emergency medical centers, drinking water distribution, water sprinkling, maintenance of law and order, sanitation arrangements, and information services.

## Kerala Choice

THE Congress seems to have got so used to losing elections that it struggles to be decisive after it actually wins. The remarkable victory in Kerala was the face-saver for the party in the recent Assembly elections. Yet, the Congress took no less than 10 days to appoint VD Satheesan as the chief minister. It's true that the high command was spoilt for choice — experienced leaders such as KC Venugopal and Ramesh Chennithala were also in contention for the top post — but the inordinate delay in naming the CM exposed the Congress' familiar struggle with internal consensus-building.

In choosing Satheesan, the party appears to have rewarded political performance over hierarchy. Over the past five years, he emerged as one of Kerala's most prominent Opposition voices, consistently challenging the Left government on corruption and misgovernance. His sharp legislative interventions and energetic campaigning helped revitalise the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) after its 2021 defeat. More importantly, he succeeded in projecting a younger and more assertive image of the party in the southern state.

Venugopal, who is close to Rahul Gandhi, has "humbly accepted" the top brass' decision, which aims to balance the party's state and national interests. His continued organisational role at the central level is vital for the Congress in view of the 2027-28 Assembly elections and the 2029 Lok Sabha polls. The party will expect Venugopal and Chennithala to provide tangible support to Satheesan, who has his work cut out. The new government must address youth unemployment (which prevails despite a high literacy rate), rising debt, infrastructure concerns and social welfare expectations, while maintaining unity among UDF allies. The Congress should make the most of this opportunity to assert its southern dominance through good governance.

## LPG Price

THE Rs 993 increase in commercial LPG prices, pushing the 19-kg cylinder beyond Rs 3,000, is striking as much for its timing as for its scale. Announced just days after Assembly elections concluded in four states, the move is bound to invite scrutiny. It suggests that price decisions, while driven by global pressures, may also be calibrated around electoral cycles. The hike itself was neither abrupt nor unexpected. Crude oil prices have climbed sharply in recent weeks, crossing the \$100-per-barrel mark amid escalating tensions in West Asia. Supply uncertainties and market volatility had already



made a price correction inevitable. In that sense, the increase was anticipated; only its timing raises questions.

The choice of timing — and of the segment — tells its own story. Domestic LPG prices remain untouched, sparing households a direct burden. Commercial users, however, face a sharp escalation. This distinction shifts the impact away from voters and onto businesses — restaurants, eateries and small vendors — who are more likely to absorb or pass on the costs. The effect will surface gradually in the form of higher food prices rather than immediate public discontent. For now, households have been shielded, but this respite may not last. If global crude prices remain elevated, pressure will inevitably build for a revision in domestic LPG and piped natural gas (PNG) tariffs as well. Such increases, if they come, are likely to be staggered and calibrated. But the burden would only have been deferred, not avoided.

When expected economic adjustments follow so closely on the heels of elections, it creates the impression that decisions are being timed as much by political convenience as by market logic. India's energy vulnerability is real, and periodic corrections are unavoidable. But when timing invites doubt, credibility becomes collateral.

# India's Missing Financial Multiplier

Raghunath Mahapatra  
When Jitu Munda, a 50-year-old tribal man from Dianali village in the Kendujhar (Keonjhar) district of Odisha, India, walked into his nearest bank branch carrying his deceased sister's skeletal remains, he was not merely confronting bureaucratic indifference but he had also confronted a financial system he did not understand fully. After the death of his sister, who had some amount in her bank account, he reportedly struggled to withdraw it because he could not navigate the documentation required for a death claim. Asked repeatedly for proof of death, he exhumed her remains and carried them to the branch. The episode triggered outrage, administrative intervention and compensation promises.

The horror of the incident lay not simply in the grotesque image it produced. It exposed the missing layer in India's financial inclusion story: the country has opened bank accounts faster than it has equipped citizens to understand nominations, claims, documentation and the basic rules governing their own money. That distinction matters because India's first-generation financial inclusion project has been undeniably successful. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana has pushed total accounts beyond 55 Crore, nearly two-thirds of them in rural and semi-urban India. Digital payments have expanded rapidly. Welfare transfers increasingly move through formal channels. But access without comprehension creates ownership without agency.

As Annamaria Lusardi argues, personal finance is not merely about

individual well-being; it shapes the financial stability of countries. Financial literacy, in that sense, is economic infrastructure.

India's literacy challenge is no longer simply about reading. The more policy-useful benchmark comes from the RBI-NCFE's Financial Literacy and Inclusion Survey, which placed India's average score at just 11.7 out of 21. Based on the globally used Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/INFE framework, it measures financial knowledge (interest, inflation, risk diversification), financial behaviour (budgeting, bill payments, borrowing discipline), and attitudes such as long-term planning. That makes it more policy-relevant than the narrower Standard & Poor's survey, which found only 24% of Indian adults could correctly answer basic questions on inflation, compound interest, numeracy and risk diversification. One measures broad financial capability; the other measures strict conceptual mastery. Together, they reveal a deeper deficit. That deficit already carries visible costs. As per RBI, unclaimed bank deposits rose to Rs.78,213 Crore by March 2024 and the deficit is also reflected with the lapse of Insurance claims, stranded provident fund balances. Households save formally but often allocate inefficiently and this reflects India's missing financial multiplier.

The multiplier works through three channels. It improves savings efficiency by moving households from idle balances and dormant accounts into productive financial instruments. It improves credit

discipline by helping borrowers better understand repayment costs and respond rationally to interest-rate signals. And it strengthens household resilience through insurance, pensions and emergency preparedness.

When these channels remain weak, the macroeconomic costs compound: savings remain underutilised, credit quality deteriorates, households remain vulnerable to shocks, and financial deepening generates weaker returns for the broader economy. India expands financial access without fully converting household savings into capital formation. Money left unclaimed, poorly allocated, or locked in dormant accounts does not simply sit idle—it weakens credit intermediation, slows productive investment and reduces the growth impulse formal finance is meant to generate.

At its core, this is a productivity problem disguised as a literacy problem. A household that cannot claim its insurance delays recovery after a health shock. A worker who cannot transfer provident fund savings loses long-term returns. A family that keeps savings idle or falls for fraud reduces investible surplus. Multiply these micro failures across millions of households, and the result is slower capital formation, weaker consumption stability and lower long-term growth.

The global evidence also reflects this. A 2025 study covering 61 economies found that higher financial literacy improves GDP-per-capita growth, with the gains strongest in lower-income economies, and also delays the diminishing returns to financial-sector

expansion by over 7 per cent. Another study across 49 African economies found financial inclusion alone had no statistically significant effect on growth; gains emerged only when literacy improved alongside access.

India is not short of programmes. RBI runs Financial Literacy Centres. The National Centre for Financial Education designs national modules. Securities and Exchange Board of India funds investor awareness programmes, even as concerns persist over underutilisation and weak outcome tracking in parts of its education corpus. Yet success is still measured through camps organised, pamphlets distributed and accounts opened: not through nominee registration rates, dormant account reduction, claim settlement efficiency or sustained investment participation.

India's first generation of reform opened accounts. Its second-generation challenge is ensuring citizens can protect, inherit and grow what those accounts hold. Until financial literacy converts savings into productive capital, improves credit behaviour, and strengthens household resilience, India's missing financial multiplier will remain unrealised.

Jitu Munda received compensation. His village briefly entered national headlines. But unless his family, and millions like them, are equipped to understand the basic rules that govern their own money, India will keep expanding financial access without unlocking its full economic value.

The writer is Former Senior Project Associate, HSS Department, IIT Kanpur

## Long Screen Hours and Digital Dementia

P.K. Pramanik  
Have you noticed that people today forget things more easily than before? Misplacing keys, mobile phones, pens, or important documents has become common. Many dismiss it as a natural part of aging, but the problem is not limited to older people. Increasingly, even children and young adults struggle with memory, attention, and concentration. One of the major reasons behind this growing problem is excessive dependence on digital devices and long screen hours.

The human brain, though weighing only a few hundred grams, is the most powerful organ in the body. Made up of billions of neurons, it controls every voluntary and involuntary function. The cerebrum, cerebellum, and brain stem work together with glands such as the thalamus, hypothalamus, pituitary gland, and medulla to regulate memory, thinking, emotions, movement, breathing, heartbeat, hunger, and body balance.

Like muscles in the body, the brain becomes stronger when it is used regularly. Activities such as memorising facts, solving mathematical problems, reading, recalling events, doing puzzles, or playing quizzes keep the brain active and improve cognitive abilities. Earlier generations often depended on mental calculations, remembered phone numbers, learnt multiplication tables by heart, and recalled historical events or scientific principles without depending on gadgets. Such constant mental exercise sharpened memory and analytical thinking.

Today, however, the situation is changing rapidly. Smartphones and calculators have taken over many basic mental functions. Even for small calculations or remembering simple information, people instantly reach for their phones. This growing dependence weakens the brain's natural ability to think, memorise, and analyse. Experts describe this condition as "digital dementia" — a decline in memory and cognitive abilities caused by excessive use of digital devices.

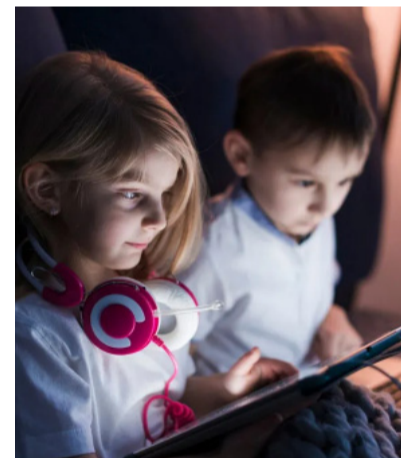
Digital dementia is marked by forgetfulness, poor concentration, inability to recall names, dates, events, or recent activities, and reduced attention span. The more dependent people become on devices, the less they exercise their own memory. Gradually, phones become smarter while human beings become mentally weaker.

Children and teenagers are among the worst affected. In many countries, concerns over excessive screen time have led to restrictions on smartphone use for children below the age of 12. Health experts often recommend limiting recreational screen exposure to less than two hours a day. Yet many children and young adults spend five to eight hours or more daily on mobile phones, gaming consoles, or laptops.

Excessive screen time not only affects memory. It also reduces physical activity, weakens muscles and bones, and affects

eyesight and posture. Many youngsters spend long hours with earphones or earbuds, exposing themselves to hearing problems and mental fatigue. Lack of outdoor activity further damages both physical and emotional health.

Scientists and psychologists now compare mobile addiction with substance addiction. Just as a drug addict becomes



restless without drugs, many people today feel anxious and uncomfortable when separated from their phones even for a short period. Continuous scrolling through social media, gaming, or watching videos stimulates the brain in unhealthy ways and reduces the ability to focus on meaningful tasks or relationships.

This growing dependence on technology is also affecting human relationships. Many people prefer virtual interaction over real conversations with family members, friends, or neighbours. Youngsters of the so-called Gen Z

Like muscles in the body, the brain becomes stronger when it is used regularly. Activities such as memorising facts, solving mathematical problems, reading, recalling events, doing puzzles, or playing quizzes keep the brain active and improve cognitive abilities. Earlier generations often depended on mental calculations, remembered phone numbers, learnt multiplication tables by heart, and recalled historical events or scientific principles without depending on gadgets. Such constant mental exercise sharpened memory and analytical thinking.

generation often spend more time online than engaging with society around them. Social isolation, anxiety, and loneliness are increasing despite constant digital connectivity.

The rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence has added another dimension to the problem. Applications such as ChatGPT and similar AI tools are becoming part of daily life. While AI can be highly useful in education, communication, and professional work, overdependence on it may gradually reduce independent thinking and creativity. If humans stop using their own minds for analysis and decision-making, they risk losing critical

mental abilities.

Excessive mobile use is also affecting personal and family life. Long hours on phones create distance between couples, parents and children, and friends. Reports of broken relationships, emotional stress, and even extreme conflicts linked to digital addiction are becoming increasingly common. Technology, which was



designed to make life easier, is slowly controlling human behaviour.

The good news is that the problem can still be addressed. Reducing screen time is the first step. Avoiding unnecessary social media use, limiting entertainment browsing, and taking regular breaks from devices can significantly improve mental health. Instead of spending hours online, people should engage more in real-world activities such as meeting friends and relatives, participating in community events, reading books, travelling, or pursuing hobbies.

Children, especially, should be encouraged to play outdoor games, participate in cultural and extracurricular activities, and interact socially without depending on mobile phones. Schools and colleges can also help by restricting unnecessary smartphone use within campuses.

Experts also recommend activities such as meditation, yoga, deep breathing exercises, hiking, camping, swimming, music, and dance to improve concentration, memory, and emotional balance. Such activities stimulate the brain naturally and strengthen social bonds.

The brain grows stronger the more it is used. Mobile phones are undoubtedly useful devices that have transformed communication and access to information. However, misuse and overdependence can damage memory, critical thinking, relationships, and overall well-being.

The choice ultimately lies with us. We can either use technology wisely as a helpful tool or allow it to dominate our lives and weaken our minds. A healthy society depends on mentally active, emotionally balanced, and socially connected individuals — not people enslaved by screens.

## Odisha-Based IFI Foundation Wins Global Recognition for Stroke Awareness Campaign

OP Bureau

Odisha-based IFI Foundation has earned global recognition from the World Stroke Organization for its extensive public health awareness campaign on brain stroke conducted during World Stroke Day 2025.

The Foundation received the prestigious 'Highly Commended' award in the category of 'Best Campaign in a Low and Middle Income Country' for its flagship initiative, "Spot Stroke Save Lives." The awards were announced recently by the World Stroke Organization (WSO), which acknowledged the contributions of stroke support organisations and individuals worldwide in prevention, awareness and management of stroke.

Congratulating the Foundation, WSO President Professor Jeyaraj Pandian praised IFI's high-quality communication strategy, strong media outreach and effective alignment with the global WSO #ActFAST symptom recognition campaign.

The WSO also featured IFI's campaign on its official platform, describing it as a "strong multi-platform communication campaign in Odisha State, founded in good understanding of communication needs of the audience, high quality content and excellent use of social and digital media."

Only four stroke support organisations and one individual from across the world were recognised by WSO this year under different award categories.

Since 2023, IFI Foundation has been actively working to strengthen community awareness on stroke prevention, early detection, emergency response, rehabilitation and long-term management. Its multilingual public health campaigns have combined digital outreach with grassroots engagement to spread awareness among diverse sections of society.

The organisation has also been advocating policy measures to address the growing burden of stroke and encouraging young people to act as community ambassadors and "stroke spotters" capable of identifying symptoms and helping save lives.

"We are deeply humbled and encouraged by this recognition. This success belongs collectively to all our partners and stakeholders who stood with us in amplifying the urgent message that stroke is preventable, treatable and beatable through timely action and awareness," said Nilambar Rath.

According to the World Stroke Organization, one in four people worldwide is at risk of experiencing a brain stroke during their lifetime. Stroke remains one of the leading causes of death and disability globally, underscoring the urgent need for awareness on symptoms, risk factors, emergency response and rehabilitation, along with promotion of preventive lifestyle practices.

# India Issues Chair Statement After BRICS Meeting Amid Differences Over West Asia Conflict

New Delhi, 15/5: Insisting that there were differing views among members with regard to the situation in West Asia and the Middle East, India on Friday issued a chair's statement instead of a joint statement at the conclusion of the two-day BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi. The BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening multilateral cooperation to address humanitarian crisis worldwide and expressed concern at the dwindling of international responses. They strongly condemned all violations of international humanitarian law, including deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as the denial or obstruction of humanitarian access and the targeting of humanitarian personnel. The ministers underlined the need to address accountability for violations of international humanitarian law. They acknowledged international efforts made by BRICS members to promote respect for, adherence to, and effective implementation of International Humanitarian Law. "There were differing views among some members as regard



to the situation in the West Asia/Middle East region. BRICS members expressed their respective national positions and shared a range of perspectives. Views articulated by them included the need for an early resolution of the current crisis, the value of dialogue and diplomacy, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, upholding international law, the importance of safe and unimpeded flow of maritime commerce through international waterways, and the protection of civilian

infrastructure and civilian lives. The impact of recent developments on the global economic situation was stressed by many members. "The ministers expressed strong condemnation of any acts of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, irrespective of their motivation, whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed. They condemned the terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir in April last year, which claimed 26 lives and injured several others." They reaffirmed their commitment to combating

terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the cross-border movement of terrorists, terrorism financing and safe havens. They reiterated that terrorism should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group and that all those involved in terrorist activities and their support must be held accountable and brought to justice in accordance with relevant national and international law. They urged to ensure zero tolerance for terrorism and rejected double

standards in countering terrorism," the statement said. They stressed the primary responsibility of nations in combating terrorism and the global efforts to stop and counter terrorist threats must fully comply with their obligations under international law, including the Charter of the UN, particularly the purposes and principles thereof, and relevant international conventions and protocols, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, as applicable. The ministers welcomed the activities of the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Working Group (CTWG) and its five Subgroups based upon the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Action Plan and the CTWG position paper. They looked forward to further deepening counter-terrorism cooperation. They called for an expeditious finalisation and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in the UN framework. They called for concerted actions against all UN designated terrorists and terrorist entities.

# Rs 3 Hike In Fuel Prices Marginal As Oil Firms Absorbing Losses Of Rs 1,000 Crore A Day: Top Official

New Delhi, 15/5: The marginal Rs 3 per litre hike in petrol and diesel prices announced by the government is a mere drop in the bucket compared to the huge losses that the public sector oil companies are absorbing due to soaring global prices of crude oil, which have crossed \$100 a barrel, a senior official said on Friday. The small increase reflects the Centre's broader strategy of protecting consumers from the full impact of the global oil shock, the official said. Sources said petrol under-recoveries are currently estimated at around Rs 26 per litre, while diesel under-recoveries are as high as Rs 82 per litre. In that context, officials indicated that even a modest Rs 3 hike would account for only a fraction of the financial burden currently being borne by government-owned Indian Oil, BPCL, and HPCL. According to top sources, the state-run oil marketing companies, along with the government, are currently absorbing losses of nearly Rs 1,000 crore every day to prevent a sharp increase in retail fuel prices despite the surge in global crude oil prices triggered by escalating tensions in West Asia. The government's message, sources said, is clear: it does not want Indian consumers to bear the full burden of rising global crude prices through steep increases in pump prices. Officials also said a sharp fuel price hike would have widespread inflationary consequences across the economy by increasing transportation costs, pushing up food prices, and hurting household budgets at a sensitive time for domestic demand. The Centre is also shielding the country's agriculture sector from the global price shocks. Sources pointed out that the government is already bearing a fertiliser subsidy burden estimated at nearly Rs 2.25 lakh crore to protect farmers from rising input costs. Officials said the broader policy approach currently is to focus on reducing fuel consumption gradually and improving energy efficiency rather than imposing sudden price shocks on consumers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sources added, has been pushing for lower fuel consumption patterns and reduced import dependence instead of aggressive retail price hikes. The concerns stem from India's growing import burden amid elevated crude oil prices. Government sources described the situation as a "massive twin drain" caused by rising oil and gold imports. India's annual crude oil import bill is estimated at around Rs 12-15 lakh crore, with every \$10 increase in crude prices adding nearly \$13-14 billion to the country's import burden.

# EAM Jaishankar Holds Bilateral Talks With Counterparts From Malaysia, Uganda And Cuba

New Delhi, 15/5: Deepening cooperation across various sectors, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Friday held a series of bilateral meetings with his counterparts from participating countries on the sidelines of the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi. EAM met his Malaysian counterpart, Mohamad Hasan, with both sides reviewing the progress of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two nations. The two leaders also discussed the follow-up on the outcomes from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Malaysia in February this year. Sharing the details of the meeting on X, EAM posted: "Always good to meet FM Mohamad Hasan of Malaysia. Reviewed the progress of our comprehensive strategic partnership, including follow-up on the outcomes from PM Narendra Modi's visit to Malaysia earlier this year." EAM Jaishankar also met the Foreign Minister of Uganda, Odongo Jeje



Abubakar, as the two leaders discussed ways to expand bilateral cooperation across key sectors, including food and health security, while exploring greater technological collaboration and stronger business linkages. Taking to his X following the meeting, EAM posted, "Great meeting FM Odongo Jeje Abubakar of Uganda on the sidelines of BRICS India 2026 FMM. Our longstanding cooperation continues to advance. Discussed food and health security, as well as experience sharing, including the use of technology and

stronger linkages enabled by the Indian community and businesses." EAM also held talks with the Foreign Minister of Cuba, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, where the two sides reviewed bilateral cooperation in areas such as health, development initiatives and capacity building. Both leaders also exchanged an MoU for regular diplomatic consultations between the foreign ministries of India and Cuba. "Glad to meet FM Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla of Cuba. Discussed cooperation focusing on health, development partnership and capacity building.

# From 1951 To 2026, EC Tracks Voter Surge, Turnout In Assam, Bengal, TN, Kerala And Puducherry

New Delhi, 15/5: The Election Commission of India has released detailed data charting the electoral journey of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and the Union Territory of Puducherry from the first general and Assembly elections after Independence to the Assembly polls held in April and May 2026. The data highlights a sharp rise in voter strength over the decades, along with consistently high polling participation across these regions. The Election Commission of India (ECI) released the data under the theme "Chunav Ka Parv, Matdata Ka Garv", highlighting how the electorate in these four states and the Union Territory has multiplied several times over the decades, while voter turnout has remained among the highest in the country. Among all the states, West Bengal has recorded the highest latest polling percentage at 93.71 per cent in the Assembly polls, the highest since Independence. The state's electoral participation graph shows a steady climb from the



early decades after Independence, when polling remained below 50 per cent in the 1950s, to consistently crossing the 75 per cent mark from the late 1970s onwards in both the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls. The number of voters in the state has surged from nearly 76 lakh in 1951 to over 6.38 crore ahead of the 2026 Assembly election. Assam has also shown a remarkable rise in electoral participation in the just-concluded Assembly elections. The latest turnout figure stands at 86.33 per cent. The voter base

in the state has expanded sharply from around 24 lakh voters in 1951 to more than 2.16 crore voters in 2026. However, the Election Commission also points to a sharp drop in voters in the 1983 Assembly election, which was held amid the peak of violence in the state. The polling percentage was nearly 32 per cent. Several constituencies had witnessed extremely poor polling, making 1983 one of the most turbulent elections in Assam's history. In Tamil Nadu, polling participation has touched 86.03

per cent in the latest trend shown by the Commission. The state's electorate has grown from nearly 1.59 crore voters in the 1967 election to close to 4.94 crore voters for the 2026 polls. The turnout curve reflects stable and high public participation across successive elections, particularly from the 1970s onwards. Kerala recorded the latest turnout figure of 79.53 per cent in the April 9 Assembly polls. The state began its electoral journey with around 58 lakh voters in 1957 and has now crossed 2.16 crore electors. Kerala's polling percentage has largely remained within the high 70s and 80s across decades, reflecting sustained voter engagement. The Union Territory of Puducherry emerged as another standout performer with a turnout figure of 91.19 per cent. From just over 1.71 lakh voters in 1964, the electorate has expanded to nearly 8.67 lakh voters in 2026. Despite its smaller size, Puducherry has consistently recorded robust participation in Assembly elections.

# SC Announces Virtual Hearings, Car-Pooling, Partial WFH For Registry Staff

New Delhi, 15/5: The Supreme Court on Friday announced a series of fuel conservation measures, including virtual hearings on miscellaneous days, car-pooling by judges and Work From Home (WFH) arrangements for registry staff, in line with the Centre's broader push to cut fuel consumption amid the ongoing West Asia crisis. In a circular issued by Secretary General Bharat Parashar, the apex court said that matters listed on miscellaneous days — Mondays, Fridays or such other days declared as miscellaneous — as well as matters taken up during partial working days, will now be heard only through video-conferencing until further orders. "The Registry shall ensure that links for the video-conferencing are sent in a timely manner, maintain stable video-conferencing facilities and extend timely technical



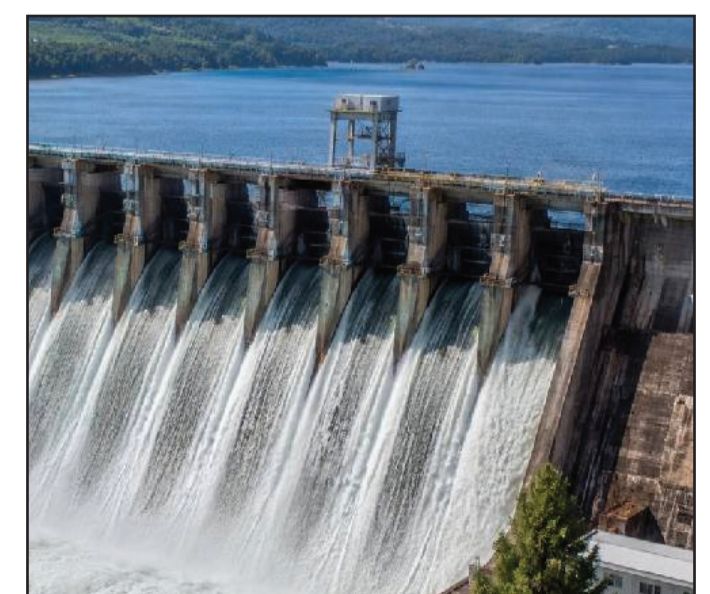
assistance so as to avoid any inconvenience to the Hon'ble Court," the circular stated. The Supreme Court also said that its judges have "unanimously resolved" to encourage car-pooling arrangements among themselves "to ensure optimum utilisation of fuel". In another significant step, the apex court permitted up to 50 per cent staff in each branch or section of the registry to

work from home for up to two days a week. The circular clarified that the remaining staff would continue to remain physically present in office to ensure uninterrupted functioning of the court administration. "The Registrar concerned shall ensure that a weekly roster is prepared before the commencement of the week," the circular said. It further directed that officials

permitted to work from home must remain available on telephone and be prepared to attend office whenever required. The circular also empowered concerned Registrars to restrict or modify the WFH arrangement in branches where the nature of work requires physical presence or where remote functioning is found ineffective. The measures come days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to citizens and institutions to reduce fuel consumption and avoid unnecessary expenditure in view of the economic pressures arising from the prolonged conflict in West Asia. Several state governments and organisations, including the Delhi government, have since announced fuel-saving steps such as WFH arrangements, promotion of public transport and curbs on official travel.

# Digital Tools, Rehabilitation Project Enhance India's Dam Safety And Ageing Resilience

New Delhi, 15/5: The Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP), statutory oversight under the Dam Safety Act, 2021, and digital tools such as DHARMA are strengthening real-time monitoring, inspection and data-driven safety management of Indian dams, the government said on Friday. The nation is shifting focus from dam expansion to safety, resilience and lifecycle management to deal with the increasing age of its extensive network of large dams and changing climatic conditions, an official statement said. The DRIP is being implemented in phases to improve dam safety and operational performance. The aforesaid act provides surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of the specified dam for the prevention of dam failure-related disasters. It also provides an institutional mechanism to ensure their safe functioning and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The government



highlighted that India ranks third worldwide in large dams, with 6,628 specified dams, of which 6,545 are operational and 83 are under construction, and a combined gross water storage capacity of about 330 billion cubic metres. About 26 per cent or 1,681 dams, among them are more than 50 years old,

including 291 that are over 100 years old, the statement added. Around 42 per cent of dams fall within the 25-50 years age bracket. India's oldest, the Kallanai (Grand Anicut) in Tamil Nadu, has functioned for nearly 2,000 years, showcasing enduring engineering and maintenance.

## Africa CDC Confirms Ebola Outbreak In Eastern Congo

Kinshasa, 15/5: Health authorities have confirmed a new outbreak of Ebola virus disease in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on Friday. Hundreds of suspected cases have been reported in Ituri Province, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

Preliminary tests by the National Institute of Biomedical Research detected the virus in 13 of 20 samples, Africa CDC said in a statement, citing consultations with the DRC's Ministry of Health and National Public Health Institute. Xinhua news agency reported. About 246 suspected cases and 65 deaths have been recorded, mainly in Mongwalu and Rwampara, with four deaths among confirmed cases. Suspected cases have also been reported in Bunia. Africa CDC warned of a high risk of further spread due to urban settings,



population movement, mining activities, insecurity, and proximity to Uganda and South Sudan. The agency is convening an urgent meeting on Friday afternoon with health authorities from the DRC, Uganda and South Sudan, as well as key international partners, to strengthen cross-border coordination, surveillance and

response efforts. Africa CDC Director General Jean Kaseya stressed that rapid regional coordination is essential due to the high mobility between affected areas and neighbouring countries. Previously, on September 4, 2025, the DRC government confirmed an Ebola outbreak in Kasai Province in central DRC, the country's 16th

outbreak since 1976. The flare-up came amid an agitated public health environment, marked by the simultaneous resurgence of mpox, cholera, and measles across the country. The DRC, on December 2, 2025, declared an end to the previous Ebola outbreak in the country that killed 45. "On behalf of the government, and taking into account all the scientific and operational indicators confirming that the chain of transmission of the virus has been broken, I hereby officially declare the end of the 16th Ebola outbreak in the DRC," Health Minister Roger Kamba told a ceremony in the capital, Kinshasa. Ebola is a highly contagious hemorrhagic fever that causes symptoms such as fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, generalised pain, and malaise, and in many cases, internal and external bleeding, according to the WHO.

## PM Modi, UAE Prez Oversee Signing Of New Pacts To Boost Bilateral Energy, Economic Ties

Abu Dhabi, 15/5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Friday agreed to launch new initiatives to promote a comprehensive energy partnership. In this context, they welcomed the conclusion of a Strategic Collaboration Agreement between Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company to enhance the UAE's participation in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves to 30 million barrels, and to work together to set up strategic gas reserves in India, according to a Prime Minister's Office statement issued after the meeting between the two leaders in Abu Dhabi. They also welcomed the arrangement entered into between Indian Oil Corporation Limited and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company on long-term Liquefied Petroleum Gas supplies. The two leaders welcomed the announcement of



USD 5 billion in investment into India by UAE entities. This includes investments of USD 3 billion by the Emirates New Development Bank in RBL Bank of India, USD 1 billion by the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority in the National Infrastructure and Investment Fund of India for priority infrastructure projects in India, and USD 1 billion by the International Holding Company

in Sammaan Capital of India. These investments underscore the UAE's sustained, long-term commitment to India's growth story and strengthen the bilateral strategic investment partnership, the statement said. The other agreements signed during PM Modi's visit to the UAE include the inking of a Memorandum of Understanding between Cochin Shipyard Limited and Drydocks

World, Dubai, for setting up a Ship Repair Cluster at Vadinar in Gujarat, including offshore fabrication, under the Maritime Development Fund Scheme launched by the Government of India, the Prime Minister's Office statement said. The tripartite Memorandum of Understanding between Cochin Shipyard Limited, Drydocks World Dubai, and the Centre of Excellence in Maritime and Shipbuilding on skill development in ship repair establishes a framework to mobilise, train and employ a skilled maritime workforce, enhances the capabilities of the Indian maritime workforce, and positions India as a hub for skilled shipbuilding and ship repair professionals, the statement said. Besides, the two sides concluded a term sheet for setting up an 8 Exaflop Super Compute Cluster in partnership between the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, India, and G-42, UAE.

## Brazil Extend Ancelotti's Contract Until 2030

Rio de Janeiro: Carlo Ancelotti has extended his contract as manager of Brazil's national team until 2030, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said. The 66-year-old Italian took over as Brazil's head coach in May 2025 and secured the team's qualification for the FIFA World Cup 2026, which begins next month in the United States, Mexico and Canada. In total, he has been in charge for ten matches, with five wins, two draws, and three losses. "I arrived in Brazil a year ago. From the very first minute, I understood what football means to this country," Ancelotti told the CBF's official website. "For a year now, we've been working to bring the Brazilian national team back to the top of the world. But the CBF and

I want more. More wins, more time, more work." "We are very happy to announce that we will continue together for another four years," said Ancelotti. "We're going all the way to the 2030 World Cup. I want to thank the CBF for their trust. Thank you, Brazil, for the warm welcome and all the affection." Ancelotti has overseen five wins, two draws and three losses since his appointment. CBF President Samir Xaud called the extension a historic day. "Carlo Ancelotti's contract extension represents another firm step in our commitment to providing the five-time World Cup-winning national team with an increasingly strong, modern, and competitive structure," he

## Trump-Xi Summit Highlights Cooperation, Lacks Breakthroughs On Key Fault Lines

Beijing: When US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in Beijing this week, their cordial exchange of pleasantries, a firm handshake and emphasis on cooperation fueled cautious optimism about relations between the two superpowers. However, a lack of major breakthroughs on complex issues, including the status of Taiwan, underscored the persistent challenges facing the Sino-US relationship amid increasingly rancorous competition over trade, security and technological leadership. Above all, the latest Trump-Xi summit drove home one clear message: The leaders of the world's most powerful nations remain on speaking terms and plan to meet several more times this year alone, including during Xi's anticipated reciprocal visit to Washington in September, Yonhap news agency reported. "When there were difficulties, we worked it out. I would call you, and you would call me," Trump said at the start of the talks with Xi on Thursday. "Whenever we had a problem, we worked it out very quickly, and we are going to have a fantastic

future together." Xi struck a cooperative tone, stressing that the United States and China should be "partners, not rivals." "China and the United States both stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation," he said in his remarks translated through an interpreter. "We should help each other succeed and prosper together, and find the right way for major countries to get along well with each other in the new era." Friday's summit venue, Zhongnanhai, added to the mood for Sino-US cooperation. Zhongnanhai is the central complex of the top Chinese leadership. Situated close to the Forbidden City, it was where then US President Richard Nixon met then Chinese leader Mao Zedong in 1972 to lay the groundwork for Sino-US detente. Despite the cooperative atmosphere, the summit brought renewed attention to long-running geopolitical fault lines between Washington and Beijing, including Taiwan, the self-governing democracy that China considers part of its territory. Xi warned during Thursday's summit that if the Taiwan question is



mismanaged, the two countries may end up having "clashes" and "even conflicts," according to Xinhua News Agency. In an interview with Fox News, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who doubles as Trump's top National Security Advisor, said "it is not in China's interest or anyone's interest for there to be any sort of forced change in the status quo" regarding Taiwan. "I think stability there is very important," the Secretary said.

In the lead-up to Trump's China trip, speculation had lingered that the Trump administration could consider a shift in US policy language to "opposing" Taiwan's independence from "not supporting" it. On Iran, the two sides found some common ground, though they diverged on China's purchase of Iranian oil. The US and China agreed at the summit that Iran can never have a nuclear weapon, and that the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial shipping route

## Thailand Declares Hantavirus 'Dangerous Communicable Disease'

Bangkok, 15/5: Thailand's National Communicable Disease Committee on Friday approved the designation of hantavirus as a "dangerous communicable disease." According to the Ministry of Public Health, the new mandate requires authorities to report suspected cases within three hours, conduct disease investigations within 12 hours, and enforce a strict 42-day quarantine for high-risk contacts. Hantavirus, which can spread through respiratory droplets, with certain strains capable of human-to-human transmission, has emerged as a significant global concern and a serious threat, necessitating the designation, the ministry said in a statement, Xinhua news agency reported. To ensure a rapid and coordinated response, the ministry said it is implementing an elevated action plan focusing on surveillance, laboratory testing, medical treatment, and local implementation. Health authorities are stepping up monitoring at international points of entry, with the Department of Disease Control finalising "Patients Under Investigation" definitions and immediate investigation protocols for



domestic cases, alongside the quarantine enforcement, said Somruek Chungsamarn, the ministry's permanent secretary. Somruek said provincial public health offices and hospitals nationwide have been tasked to maintain close surveillance, ensuring facilities report suspected cases within three hours, review treatment protocols, and immediately communicate risks to local populations. He urged anyone with a history of rodent exposure or recent travel from high-risk areas who develops a high fever and difficulty breathing to seek immediate medical attention to ensure rapid diagnosis and prevent the disease from spreading. Hantaviruses are a group of viruses carried by

rodents that can cause severe disease in humans. Infection typically occurs through contact with infected rodents or their urine, droppings, or saliva, while human-to-human transmission is rare. Human Hantavirus infection is primarily acquired through contact with the urine, faeces, or saliva of infected rodents or by touching contaminated surfaces. Exposure typically occurs during activities such as cleaning buildings with rodent infestations, though it may also occur during routine activities in heavily infested areas. Human cases are most commonly reported in rural settings, such as forests, fields, and farms, where rodents are present, and opportunities for exposure are greater.

## US Congressman Urges Trump To Publicly Disclose Any China-Linked Financial Interests

Washington, 15/5: Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi has demanded that President Donald Trump publicly disclose any China-linked financial interests involving himself, his family, or senior administration officials as Trump meets Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing. In a letter sent on Thursday, Krishnamoorthi said Americans "deserve confidence" that US policy towards China is being driven by national interests and not private business considerations. "Given the national security and economic stakes in the US-China relationship, the American people deserve confidence that outcomes of the summit and US policy are being conducted solely in the national interest, not influenced by private financial motivations," Krishnamoorthi wrote. The Illinois Democrat raised concerns over Trump's continued business interests and alleged ties between Trump-affiliated entities and Chinese authorities. "To date, you

have not divested from your own multi-billion-dollar business interests or created a blind trust, and though you have reportedly handed daily management of the Trump Organization to your children, you and your family still stand to profit from deals related to your family's businesses," the letter said. Krishnamoorthi cited findings from a Democratic staff report of the House Oversight Committee, which said entities linked to the Chinese government spent more than \$5.5 million at Trump-owned properties during his first term. The letter also referred to reports that Trump-affiliated businesses received trademarks and approvals from Chinese authorities while he was serving as President. The Congressman said he was particularly worried about "the possibility of concessions or policy shifts being discussed or agreed to in ways that could create even the appearance of personal benefit". He specifically referred to issues involving

advanced AI chip exports to China, US policy towards Taiwan, and possible discussions over American arms sales to Taiwan. Krishnamoorthi asked Trump to publicly disclose "any current or recent business dealings, investments, trademarks, or licensing agreements in China" involving Trump, his family, the Trump Organisation, or affiliated entities. The Indian American Congressman in his letter sought details about "pending or recently approved trademarks, permits, or regulatory approvals granted by Chinese authorities to Trump-affiliated entities" and "any financial interests held by senior administration officials or immediate family members that could present a conflict of interest involving China policy". "Transparency is essential to maintaining public trust and ensuring that US policy toward China is driven by America's national interests alone," Krishnamoorthi wrote.

temporary trade truce set to expire later this year, as the Trump administration is conducting trade investigations into China and other countries, which could result in new tariffs. During the Trump-Xi summit in South Korea in late October, the two sides reached a one-year truce aimed at lowering existing tariffs and suspending further trade restrictions, including China's export curbs on rare earth elements. China's accelerating nuclear buildup was expected to be part of the leaders' discussions, but there was no word on whether the leaders discussed the security issue. Trump has shown his interest in forging a new arms control treaty that includes China, after the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the US and Russia, known as the New START, expired in February. China's nuclear stockpile has been growing at an alarming pace from the US perspective. China's stockpile of nuclear warheads remained in the low 600s in 2024, and its military remains on track to possess over 1,000 warheads by 2030, according to a 2025 Pentagon report on China's military developments.

## Petrol, Diesel Prices: Centre Bearing Huge Burden Through Excise Duty Cut, Says Piyush Goyal

Mumbai, 15/5: Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said the central government has taken a significant financial burden on itself by reducing excise duty on fuel and continuing heavy subsidies on fertilisers to protect farmers and consumers from rising global prices. Speaking to IANS on the sidelines of an event here, Goyal said the Centre had reduced excise duty by Rs 10 to provide relief to citizens despite mounting fiscal pressure. He added that the government was also bearing massive subsidy costs to ensure farmers do not face higher fertiliser prices. "The central government has taken more burden on itself. The excise has been reduced by Rs 10. Similarly, the expense of Rs 3,000 crore in fertiliser, our



farmers have to pay the same old price, no increase has been made. And because of this, 90 per cent subsidy has to be given by the central government by lakhs of crores," Goyal said. Commenting on Maharashtra's government

decision to cut VAT on aviation fuel, the Union Minister said sectors such as tourism and civil aviation would benefit from the government's economic measures. "Tourism will benefit a lot, the civil aviation sector which

is in a lot of pressure will also be relieved, which is an important sector for the long term. I think all the opposition ruled states, only few are left now, there are not much, they will also learn something from this," Goyal told. Commenting on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's security arrangements, Goyal said concerns over the Prime Minister's safety remain paramount. He said the reduction in security was not due to pressure from the opposition and urged that there should be no compromise on the Prime Minister's protection. "He is the Prime Minister of the country and a leader of the world. We are worried about every aspect of his security," Goyal said.

## Palm Oil Shouldn't Be Defamed Without Evidence: Experts

New Delhi, 15/5: Palm oil is crucial for India's edible oil security and reduced import dependence, experts said at an event held this week, adding that it should not be defamed without adequate evidence, PHDCCI said on Friday. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India said that it does not endorse or defame any food ingredient without credible scientific evidence and called for balanced, evidence-based public messaging.

In a conference on edible oils held by PHDCCI and AYUSH Committee, Dr. Alka Rao, Advisor, FSSAI said palm oil continues to be widely used in Indian households and the food industry owing to its stability and suitability for high-temperature cooking applications. "Our stakeholder consultation framework remains open and inclusive, allowing individuals, industry bodies and experts to present scientific data and perspectives for consideration. India's apex food regulator, FSSAI remains committed to promoting evidence-based nutrition

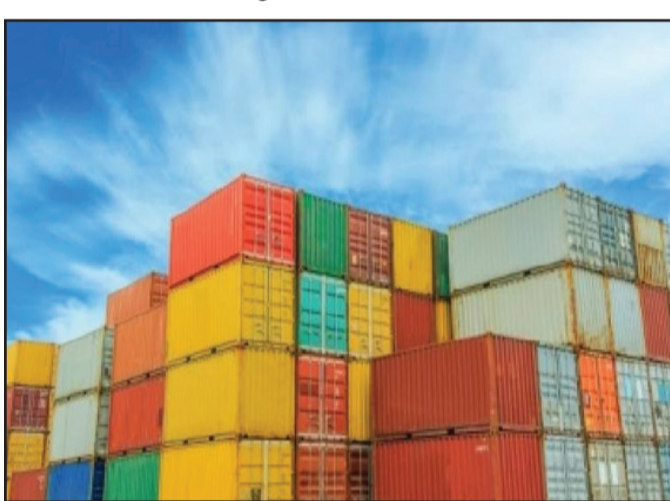


awareness and encouraging balanced, informed dietary choices among consumers," she said. The interactive conference drew over 90 delegates from industry, hospitals and academia and featured three technical sessions on palm oil science, food labels and the truth about saturated and trans fats. Speakers emphasised the role of palm oil in food security and affordability and urged clarity in public discourse. India's renewed focus on strengthening domestic palm oil cultivation is a significant step towards strengthening the country's edible oil security and reducing import dependence,

said Dr. Shri Rishi Kant, Additional Economic Advisor, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare. Through initiatives such as the National Mission on Edible Oils, the government is creating an enabling ecosystem for farmers through improved infrastructure, financial incentives and stronger market linkages, the release said. India has also expanded its oil palm cultivation ambitions significantly, with the targeted area increasing from 6.5 lakh hectares to nearly 10 lakh hectares by 2025-26, it added.

## India Eyes \$1 Trillion Exports In FY27 Backed By FTAs, Export Push

New Delhi, 15/5: India is banking on the proposed export promotion mission and a new wave of free trade agreements (FTAs) to push the country's exports towards the ambitious \$1 trillion milestone in FY27, a top government official said on Friday. Speaking to NDTV Profit, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said the government expects export growth in the current financial year to surpass last year's pace, with efforts aimed at achieving expansion well beyond the 10-15 per cent range required to meet the target. Agrawal said the proposed Export Promotion Mission is expected to become a major pillar of India's trade strategy by supporting exporters, improving access to overseas markets and helping domestic businesses tap into emerging global opportunities. "The implementation of recently



concluded FTAs in the coming months is likely to provide an additional boost to outbound shipments," he mentioned. According to the commerce secretary, India is also well-positioned to benefit from ongoing shifts in global supply chains, as multinational companies increasingly look to diversify manufacturing and

sourcing operations beyond traditional hubs. "India is steadily emerging as a reliable and trusted partner in the changing global trade ecosystem," Agrawal stated. Earlier, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had urged exporters to aggressively explore fresh opportunities created through trade agreements, while

emphasising that India should aim to cross the \$1 trillion exports mark in FY27. India's combined goods and services exports touched a record \$863.11 billion in FY26 despite geopolitical uncertainties, weak global demand and elevated tariffs imposed by the United States. While merchandise exports posted modest growth during the year, services exports continued to remain the key driver of overall trade expansion. Goyal said achieving the FY27 target would require export growth of around 16-17 per cent. He highlighted that India already has operational FTAs with the United Arab Emirates, Australia, Mauritius and the European Free Trade Association, while negotiations are currently underway with several other countries and regional blocs aimed at expanding India's global trade footprint.

## Sensex, Nifty End Lower Amid Surge In Crude Oil Prices

Mumbai, 15/5: Indian benchmark equity indices ended lower on Friday as late-session selling pressure dragged the markets down amid weakness in the rupee against the US dollar and a sharp rise in crude oil prices. The benchmark Nifty closed 46.10 points, or 0.19 per cent, lower at 23,643.50, while the Sensex declined 160.73 points, or 0.21 per cent, to settle at 75,237.99. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that a sustained breakout above this zone will be required to strengthen bullish momentum and improve broader market sentiment further toward the 23,900-24,000 range. "On the downside, the 23,500-23,400 zone continues to act as an important immediate support level, and a decisive break below this region could drag the index toward the 23,300-23,200 support area," an analyst stated. Market sentiment turned cautious during the final hours of trade after the domestic currency touched a fresh low against the US dollar, adding to concerns over rising import costs and inflationary pressures. The surge in global crude oil prices further weighed on investor sentiment, especially in energy-sensitive

sectors. Among the top laggards on the Nifty index were Hindalco Industries, Eternal and UltraTech Cement. Broader markets also witnessed selling pressure, with the Nifty MidCap index ending 0.45 per cent lower and the Nifty SmallCap index falling 0.61 per cent. Sectoral performance remained largely weak, with the Nifty Metal, Nifty Realty and Nifty Oil and Gas indices emerging as the worst-hit segments during the session. However, buying interest in technology and media stocks helped the Nifty IT and Nifty Media indices close in positive territory. Meanwhile, global oil prices rose sharply, with Brent crude's May futures contract climbing 2.9 per cent to \$108.8 per barrel on the Intercontinental Exchange, raising concerns about higher fuel costs and their potential impact on inflation and corporate margins. The Indian rupee also plunged to a fresh record low of 96.14 before settling at 95.97, as the trade deficit widened beyond market expectations and a sudden short squeeze after breaching of 96. "Technically, spot USDINR has support at 95.45, with resistance levels seen at 96.20 and 96.85," an analyst stated.

## India's Ethanol Capacity At 2,000 Crore Litre Exceeds Demand: Report

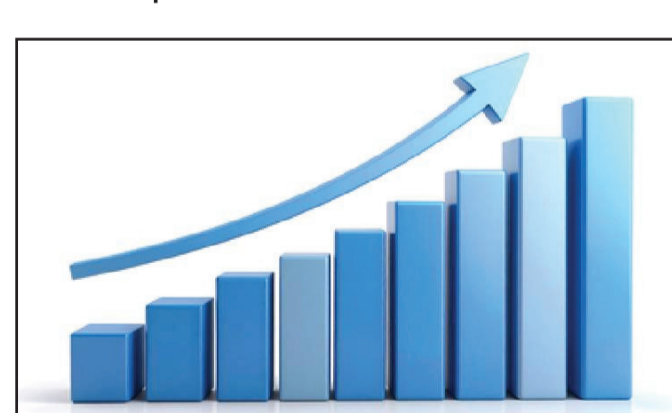
New Delhi, 15/5: India's ethanol production capacity has scaled to about 2,000 crore litres, with additional 400 crore litres expected to be operational by fiscal 2027, a new report has said. The report from CareEdge Ratings said that the demand under E20 blending is only roughly 1,100 crore litres, with nonfuel demand of around 300-350 crore litres. Only around 60 per cent of offered ethanol is being absorbed, leaving utilisation pressures across the sector. The surplus has led to the sector transitioning into a consolidation phase with utilisation likely to remain in the 65-75 per cent range for the next three years. Capacity addition is concentrated in select states such as UP, Maharashtra, Karnataka, leading to regional surpluses ranging from 277 crore litres surplus in Maharashtra to 77 crore litres deficit in Tamil Nadu. Correspondingly,

Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) activity has begun to moderate, with industry focus shifting toward brownfield capex, debottlenecking, and operational efficiencies. The report highlighted that roughly 700 crore litres of excess supply relative to absorption have kept margins under pressure. "The transition toward higher ethanol blending presents a complex mix of operational, consumer, and infrastructure challenges, even as demand is expected to rise to roughly 1200 crore litres by ESY 2026-27 and roughly 1,600 crore litres by ESY 2029-30," said Niraj Thorat, Assistant Director, CareEdge Ratings. "Achieving this will depend on FFV penetration increasing from roughly 5 per cent of new vehicle sales in FY28 to roughly 20 per cent by FY30, alongside coordinated investments in logistics, storage, and distribution to avoid supply bottlenecks and

ensure smooth adoption," he noted. Meaningful demand expansion depends on scaling up higher ethanol blends (E85/E100) and Flex Fuel Vehicle (FFV) adoption. In the absence of these demand side triggers, incremental capacity additions are unlikely to be absorbed in the near term, the report forecasted. In the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Program, India reached an average 20 per cent ethanol blending level in December 2025, five years ahead of schedule. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) then came out with draft amendments to create grounds for increasing the EBP to E85 or exclusive ethanol fuel. Ethanol has emerged as a globally preferred sustainable fuel, offering significant benefits in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing energy security, promoting agricultural demand, and supporting cleaner, renewable energy transitions across major economies worldwide.

## India's Overall Exports Rise 13.6 Pc To \$80.8 Billion In April

New Delhi, 15/5: India's overall exports registered a strong growth of 13.6 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to reach \$80.8 billion in April 2026, despite geopolitical tensions in West Asia disrupting key trade routes and global markets, according to government data released on Friday. The goods exports rose to a record \$43.56 billion in April, compared to \$38.28 billion in the same month last year. Meanwhile, services exports also witnessed healthy growth, increasing to \$37.2 billion from \$32.8 billion a year ago. Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said India's exports have remained resilient despite regional conflicts and trade disruptions, supported by the country's strategy of diversifying into new geographies and product markets. Agrawal further said the government currently does not see elevated crude oil prices hurting



India's export competitiveness. He also indicated that preliminary trends for May 2026 suggest export momentum remains encouraging despite continuing global uncertainties. India's overall imports also increased during the month to \$88.6 billion from \$82.3 billion in April 2025. Goods imports stood at \$71.9 billion against \$65.4 billion in the year-ago period, while services imports

edged lower to \$16.66 billion from \$16.9 billion. As a result, the merchandise trade deficit widened slightly to \$28.4 billion in April 2026, compared to \$27.1 billion in the corresponding month last year. The United States remained India's largest export destination, while China continued to be the country's biggest source of imports. Government officials said India has managed to cushion the

impact of geopolitical conflicts by expanding into alternative markets. According to official data, India entered 1,821 new product-country export combinations during FY26 as part of its broader export diversification strategy. Exports of ships, boats and floating structures generated \$57 million across 19 new markets, while exports of nuclear reactor and boiler parts contributed \$14.3 million across 13 new destinations. Meanwhile, India's gold imports rose sharply to \$5.63 billion in April 2026 from \$3.1 billion in the same month last year. Officials said the increase was largely driven by higher unit prices rather than a rise in import volumes. However, gold imports during FY26 declined in quantity terms even as the overall import value increased. The government noted that higher import duties on gold and silver are likely to affect consumption patterns going forward.

## Retail inflation may rise to 5.1% in current fiscal from 2% in last fiscal: Crisil

New Delhi, 15/5: Retail inflation in India is expected to rise to 5.1 per cent in the current fiscal year as higher wholesale prices, elevated crude oil costs and a weakening rupee increase pressure on consumer prices, according to a report by Crisil. The report stated that the recent sharp rise in wholesale inflation, mainly due to the ongoing West Asia conflict, could gradually pass on to consumers in the form of higher retail prices. It stated, "We

expect retail inflation to print higher at 5.1 per cent in the current fiscal compared with 2 per cent last fiscal". According to the report, Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation rose sharply to 8.3 per cent in April 2026 from 3.9 per cent in March, while Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation increased only marginally to 3.48 per cent from 3.40 per cent during the same period. The report noted that the impact of the West Asia conflict has

already started affecting wholesale prices through higher energy and commodity costs, although the full impact is yet to reflect in retail inflation. "WPI inflation decisively surpassed a benign CPI, hit by the West Asia conflict. The upside risk to inflation from the conflict is yet to materially reflect in CPI," the report said. Crisil stated that the divergence between wholesale and retail inflation is expected to continue in the current fiscal year, unlike last year. The report

explained that WPI inflation is more directly impacted by global commodity shocks because it reflects prices in wholesale markets and production costs, while CPI measures prices paid by consumers for goods and services. The report highlighted that WPI inflation has historically been more volatile than CPI inflation. According to the report, inflation in several commodity-linked segments rose sharply in April

2026. Crude petroleum inflation surged to 88.1 per cent in April from 51.6 per cent in March, while furnace oil inflation jumped to 74.2 per cent from 9.7 per cent. Natural gas inflation also increased to 24.9 per cent. Inflation in liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) rose to 10.9 per cent, while basic chemicals inflation increased to 7.8 per cent during April. The report stated that rising wholesale inflation increases input costs for industries,

which may eventually force companies to pass on higher costs to consumers. According to Crisil, retail inflation is expected to rise to 5.1 per cent in the current fiscal compared with 2 per cent in the previous fiscal. The report identified several reasons for the expected increase in inflation. These include persistently high global crude oil prices, rising prices of petrol, diesel and compressed natural gas, and the depreciation of the rupee,

which increases the cost of imported goods and raw materials. The report also warned that food inflation may rise because of disrupted agricultural production due to heatwaves and an expected below-normal monsoon linked to El Niño conditions. Crisil further stated that statistical low-base effects could also contribute to higher inflation readings in the current fiscal year.

## Madhuri Dixit, Triptii Dimri, Dharna Durga's 'Maa Behen' to premiere on June 4

Netflix has announced the premiere date of its upcoming crime-comedy 'Maa Behen', starring Madhuri Dixit, Triptii Dimri and Dharna Durgaa. The film will premiere on June 4 on the streaming platform. The announcement was made on Madhuri Dixit's birthday, with Netflix unveiling the first glimpse of the film described as a "rooted crime-comedy packed with chaos, comedy, and full-blown kaand." The post was shared with the caption, "Dhak dhak ho raha hai? Tareekh note kar lo! Watch Maa Behen, out 4 June, only on Netflix!" Directed by Suresh Triveni, 'Maa Behen' follows a dysfunctional mother-daughter trio, Rekha, Jaya and Sushma, whose lives spiral into chaos after a dead body suddenly appears in their kitchen. As they attempt to hide the truth, the family finds itself navigating lies, panic and intrusive neighbours in a fast-paced comedy of errors. The film stars Madhuri Dixit as Rekha, alongside Triptii Dimri and Dharna Durgaa as her daughters. Ravi Kishan also features in a key role. The ensemble cast includes Geetanjali Kulkarni, Arunoday Singh and Shardul Bhardwaj. Produced by Abundantia Entertainment in association with Opening Image Films, the film is backed by producers Vikram Malhotra and Suresh Triveni. The story has been written by Suresh Triveni and Pooja Tolani, who has also handled the screenplay and dialogues. Speaking about the project, Vikram Malhotra, Founder and CEO of Abundantia Entertainment, said, "Maa Behen is the kind of story that hooks you with its audacious premise and stays with you for its emotional truth. Beneath the chaos and the humour, is a deeply human story about family, society and the choices people make to survive in this judgmental world," in a press note. He added, "What excited us as at Abundantia was building a world that feels both wildly entertaining and instantly relatable. And of course, the opportunity to join hands with the amazing Suresh Triveni once again. I am very excited to work with Netflix to bring this unique and unpredictable crime-comedy to life."



## Right people saw your light...": Sonu Sood backs Alia Bhatt amid Cannes trolls

Actor Sonu Sood has come out in support of Alia Bhatt amid social media chatter surrounding her recent appearance at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival, where some online users claimed the actor was "ignored" by international paparazzi during one of her red carpet appearances. On Friday, Sonu shared a supportive note on X, urging people to celebrate Indian artists representing the country on global platforms instead of criticising them online. While he did not directly mention Alia in his post, social media users widely linked the message to the recent trolling directed at the actor. "When one of our own walks onto an international stage, it should be a moment of pride, not a reason to search for flaws," Sonu wrote. He further added, "Not every achievement needs validation from cameras, headlines, or strangers to be meaningful. The courage to stand there, represent your craft, and carry your journey with grace is an achievement in itself." Concluding his note, the actor wrote, "In a world addicted to trolling, choose encouragement. Because people who are busy building dreams don't have time to pull others down. Keep shining, my friend. The right people saw your light." Earlier, actor Aly Goni had also defended Alia against the criticism. In an Instagram post, he wrote, "It's sad when our own people try to pull down someone who has worked so hard to put India on the global stage. Alia Bhatt has reached places many only dream of, representing our country at Cannes with grace and pride." Meanwhile, Alia addressed one of the trolls directly on social media. On Wednesday, she shared a reel showcasing her ivory silk saree-gown look from Cannes. Responding to a



comment that read, "What a pity, no one noticed you," Alia replied, "Why pity love? You noticed me :)." Alia attended the festival as a global ambassador for L'Oréal Paris. Her Cannes wardrobe, including a peach-toned bustier gown and an ivory silk saree-gown, generated significant attention online. This marks her second consecutive appearance at the Cannes Film Festival as the beauty brand's global ambassador. The 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival began on May 12 and will continue until May 23.

## SPORTS

### Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary Honours Kishan With One Crore Reward For T20 WC Performance

Patna, 15/5: Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary officially felicitated Indian cricketer Ishan Kishan at his residence on Friday, honouring him with a reward of ₹1 Crore from the State government. The cash prize was awarded in recognition of Ishan's standout performances and vital role in helping Team India win the ICC T20 World Cup 2026. Kishan's family was also present on the occasion, along with some cricketers from the state, including fast bowler Sakib Hussain, who impressed with his bowling in the ongoing IPL 2026. Samrat Choudhary lauded Kishan's contribution during the World Cup. He emphasised that the financial reward acknowledges Kishan's consistency on the international stage. Chief Minister further wished the player continued success as he continues to represent the region. "The member of the Indian cricket team who won the ICC T20 World Cup 2026, the brilliant



batsman, the pride of Bihar, Shri @ishankishan51 Ji, was honoured by the state government with a cash prize of 1 crore rupees for his crucial contribution in winning the World Cup. Best wishes for a successful cricket career. Keep illuminating the name of Bihar like this," Samrat Choudhary wrote in a post on X, sharing photos of

the meet. The reward follows India's historic victory over New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium earlier this year. Kishan was instrumental during the final, featuring in a significant partnership that secured the title. Kishan finished as one of the tournament's top run-scorers. He amassed 317 runs in nine innings at an average of 35.22 and

a blistering strike rate of over 193. The wicketkeeper batter is currently representing his franchise, Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH), in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026. Kishan also led the team in the first seven matches in the absence of designated captain Pat Cummins. Under his leadership, SRH won four of the seven matches.

### Sakshi Stuns World Champion Meenakshi To Secure 51kg India Berth For CWG, Asiad

Patiala, 15/5: Sakshi Chaudhary, who defeated two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen in the semifinal of the national boxing trials, made the cut for the Indian team for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the Asian Games to be held in Japan later this year. She defeated the reigning world and Asian champion in the 48kg division, Meenakshi Hooda, who moved up to 51kg, in the final here at NIS Patiala on Friday. Sakshi, who won gold in the 54 kg category at the 2025 World Boxing Cup in Astana, dropped down to 51 kg for the trials. The boxer who loses the final will be selected for the World Boxing



Cup in Guiyang, China, from June 15 to 20, while the winner earns quotas for the two quadrennial events. Earlier, Sakshi stunned Nikhat, who won the World

Championships twice and gold in the Commonwealth Games and bronze in the Asian Games, while Meenakshi knocked out former world champion Neetu

Ghanghas. The 51kg category will have a new representative from the country top stars; Nikhat and Nitu crashed out. Nikhat was forced to take part in the trials after she failed to secure a direct entry during last month's Asian Championships in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. She had reached the semifinals in the continental meet but went down tamerly 0-5 to China's Wu Yu, the reigning Olympic gold medalist. Moreover, Sachin Siwach (men's 60kg), Preeti Pawar (women's 54kg) and Priya Ghanghas (women's 60kg) qualified for both the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games after reaching the finals of the Asian Championships in Ulaanbaatar.

### Punjab di Mitti Shines at French Riviera as Roopi Gill Honours Heritage

Punjabi actress Roopi Gill transformed the French Riviera into a celebration of heritage during her stunning red carpet debut at the 79th Cannes Film Festival. Promoting her upcoming film 'Chardikala' alongside co-star Ammy Virk, Gill chose to bypass traditional Western gowns in favor of a culturally rich ivory sharara set that captivated international photographers. Designed by the fashion house Pitambara, the ensemble drew direct inspiration from the 19th-century elegance of Maharani Jind Kaur. Every stitch told a story of the "Pind" (village). One dupatta featured delicate wheat motifs symbolizing the agricultural heart of Punjab, while the other showcased chakra patterns representing spiritual resilience. Perhaps most striking was the film's title, 'Chardikala,' intricately embroidered in Gurmukhi script directly onto the fabric. Authenticity served as the ultimate fashion statement for the actress, who described the moment as bringing "Punjab di Mitti" (the soil of Punjab) to the



global stage. Chardikala, a central tenet in Sikhism, refers to a state of eternal optimism and rising spirits—a theme that resonated through her choice of traditional Polki and Kundan jewellery accented with emerald drops. While Bollywood figures like Aishwarya Rai and Alia Bhatt frequently grace these

steps, the 2026 festival marks a shift toward regional Indian cinema. This year, the Indian pavilion has placed significant emphasis on diverse storytelling, moving beyond Mumbai-centric narratives to showcase the vibrant film industries of Punjab, Maharashtra, and Gujarat.

### 'Welcome To The Jungle' teaser unveils star-studded jungle of madness

The makers of 'Welcome To The Jungle' have released the film's highly anticipated official teaser, offering a first look at a large-scale, chaotic comedy built on meta-humour, nostalgia, and slapstick spectacle. Directed by Ahmed Khan and produced by Firoz A. Nadiadwallah, the film is set for a global theatrical release on June 26, 2026. Positioned as the third installment in the popular 'Welcome' franchise, following 'Welcome Back,' the teaser introduces a self-aware comedic tone that leans heavily into parody and ensemble-driven chaos. The teaser opens with a satirical twist on standard industry disclaimers, immediately setting a tongue-

in-cheek tone. The on-screen text reads: "In the making of this film no animals were used... except for some horses and us donkeys." The footage then transitions into a fictional film-set premise, where the ensemble cast plays characters trapped in a production environment and being paid "crores of rupees" to perform. The teaser relies on rapid-fire dialogue and situational humour. In one standout moment, Akshay Kumar's character attempts to exit the chaotic production, but then returns remarking that "money always comes in between". The action quickly escalates into exaggerated gunfire and explosive comedic sequences.