

Dumani Mail

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PM Narendra Modi to reach Gothenburg today on two-day visit to Sweden

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will reach in Gothenburg today on a two-day visit to Sweden, marking a historic milestone in India-Sweden relations. He will hold bilateral talks with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to review cooperation in trade, green transition, AI, emerging technologies, startups, resilient supply chains, defence, space, climate action, and people-to-people ties.

The two leaders will also address the European Round Table for Industry alongside European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. This visit is the third leg of Prime Minister Modi's UAE and European tour and his first to Europe since the India-EU Free Trade Agreement took effect in January 2026. Bilateral trade reached a record 7.75 billion US dollars in 2025, with Swedish investment in India totaling over 2.8 billion dollars between 2000 and 2025. The partnership was strengthened during Mr Modi's 2018 visit, which led

to the Joint Innovation Partnership for a Sustainable Future.

During bilateral the two leaders also expected to hold discussions on avenues of collaboration in green transition, AI, emerging technologies, startups, resilient supply chains, defence, space, climate action and people-to-people ties. The two Prime Ministers will also address the European Round Table for Industry, a leading pan-European business leaders forum, along with H.E. Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission. While talking to Akashvani, Mr Robin Sukhia, CEO of India-Sweden Business Council, underlines the importance of people to people connect and excitement of hosting Indian Prime Minister for the second time. The businesses across Sweden are excited with the visit to Prime Minister and hold high hopes regarding the outcome of the visit.

Yesterday, in the second leg of the Prime Minister's



tour, India and the Netherlands elevated their ties to a strategic partnership and inked 17 agreements to boost cooperation in defence, critical minerals and other key sectors. During talks between Prime Minister Modi and his Dutch counterpart Rob Jetten, both leaders expressed deep concern over the situation in West Asia, especially its serious implications for the region and the wider world in view

of disruptions caused to the global energy supplies and trade networks. Mr Modi and Mr Jetten also called for freedom of navigation and global flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz, while opposing any "restrictive" measures, and reaffirmed their support for ongoing initiatives in this regard, according to a joint statement. The two leaders also discussed the situation in Ukraine – marked by the

ongoing conflict with Russia and regional security developments. They agreed to continue supporting efforts towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine through dialogue and diplomacy, based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law. Both leaders also agreed to explore possibilities of establishing a defence industrial roadmap to ensure joint manufacturing of defence equipment, systems, components and other key capabilities through transfer of technology and setting up of joint ventures. Following the talks, India and the Netherlands unveiled a "strategic partnership roadmap" to boost ties in trade and investment, defence and security, critical and emerging technologies including semiconductors, space, AI and quantum computing. The two leaders also launched an ambitious "India-Netherlands roadmap on the development of green hydrogen".

PM Modi, Netherlands PM agree on action plan for defence, trade, and innovation

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten have adopted an ambitious Roadmap for the India-Netherlands Strategic Partnership for 2026-2030, outlining cooperation across political, economic, technological, defence and cultural sectors over the next five years.

The roadmap was adopted

collaboration in critical minerals through joint ventures, industrial partnerships and technological cooperation.

Both countries agreed to support business-to-business partnerships, encourage SME participation and expand innovation ecosystems to drive sustainable economic growth.

A major focus area under the roadmap is cooperation in Water, Agriculture and Health

Dutch universities.

Both sides also agreed to deepen cooperation in renewable energy and sustainable development through initiatives focused on green hydrogen, biofuels, battery storage, circular economy and green shipping.

India and the Netherlands will work towards developing a "Green and Digital Sea Corridor" to promote



during Prime Minister Modi's visit to the Netherlands and follows the decision by both countries to elevate bilateral ties to the level of a Strategic Partnership.

According to the roadmap document released on Saturday, both countries agreed to strengthen political dialogue through regular meetings between heads of government, foreign ministers and senior officials.

The two sides also decided to establish an annual mechanism at the foreign ministers' level to review progress under the strategic partnership and provide guidance for future cooperation.

In the economic sector, India and the Netherlands agreed to deepen trade and investment cooperation in high-growth sectors including renewable energy, semiconductors, telecommunications, maritime infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and medical technology.

The roadmap also focuses on strengthening supply chain resilience and promoting

(WAH). The two countries agreed to intensify collaboration on integrated water management, flood resilience, river basin management and sustainable water infrastructure, particularly in the Ganga Basin. The roadmap also includes support for urban river management plans, climate-resilient agriculture, food security and biotechnology cooperation. India and the Netherlands agreed to enhance public health cooperation through partnerships between institutions such as the Indian Council of Medical Research and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment.

In emerging technologies, the roadmap outlines expanded cooperation in semiconductors, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, quantum technologies and photonics. The two countries will also strengthen research collaboration between universities and technical institutions, including partnerships involving Indian Institute of Science, IITs and

sustainable maritime connectivity and support India's green hydrogen exports to Europe. In the defence and security domain, the roadmap proposes structured military interactions, enhanced maritime cooperation, defence industry partnerships and greater engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.

The two countries also agreed to strengthen cooperation in counterterrorism, cyber security, critical technologies and maritime security. On migration and mobility, India and the Netherlands agreed to facilitate fair mobility for students, researchers and skilled professionals while jointly addressing irregular migration. The roadmap also highlights the importance of cultural exchanges and people-to-people ties, including cooperation in heritage conservation, museum partnerships and tourism promotion. Both countries acknowledged the contribution of the Indian diaspora in the Netherlands in strengthening bilateral relations.

Million Minds Tech City to Create Over 63,000 High-Value Jobs: Amit Shah

New Delhi: Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said India is positioning itself as a "founder nation" in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, robotics, quantum computing and semiconductors. He made the remarks while inaugurating the first phase of 'Million Minds Tech City', Gujarat's first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) IT park, in Ahmedabad.

Addressing the gathering in Tragad, Shah said India has moved from lagging behind in several sectors to establishing a strong presence in technologies that are expected to shape the global economy over the next 25 years.

"AI and deep tech are the future economy. Under the visionary leadership of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has become a founder nation in all emerging sectors in the world today," he said.

"There was a time when we had fallen far behind in many sectors, but today India is establishing a strong presence in all the sectors that will shape the world economy," the Home Minister added.

Shah said future-oriented sectors such as robotics, autonomous systems, cybersecurity, defence technology, quantum computing, semiconductors and space technology would require highly skilled manpower and advanced infrastructure.

"The intelligence is already there; we also need



to provide them space, atmosphere and support," he said, adding that technology parks like Million Minds Tech City would help create such an ecosystem. According to officials, the first phase of the

project is being developed at an estimated cost of Rs 1,100 crore over 13.5 lakh square feet and is expected to provide workspace for around 9,000 highly skilled professionals.

The complete seven-phase project is projected to attract investments worth nearly Rs 15,000 crore and generate over 63,000 high-value jobs over the next five years.

The Home Minister also said Gujarat's economy is witnessing a transition with increasing focus on technology parks and global capability centres.

He stressed the need for modern urban planning and skilled leadership to help India keep pace with rapid global technological and economic changes.

The event was attended by Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi and representatives of Ganesh Housing.

Dharmendra Pradhan under Pressure amid NEET Paper Leak Row

Bhubaneswar (DNS): Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan is facing mounting political pressure following the controversy surrounding the alleged NEET examination paper leak. Calls for his resignation have intensified, with opposition leaders and student groups across the country demanding accountability over the issue.

Political observers say the controversy has not only placed Pradhan in a difficult position nationally but has also triggered internal tensions within the state unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Odisha. Reports suggest that a section within the party is unhappy with Pradhan's influence and may be seeking to capitalize on the current

crisis to weaken his standing.

The issue has sparked nationwide outrage, particularly among students, many of whom have begun openly protesting against the Union minister. Analysts believe the controversy is denting Pradhan's national image at a time when scrutiny over examination integrity has become a major public concern.

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi directly targeted Pradhan in a video message, demanding his resignation and holding him responsible for the alleged leak. Gandhi alleged that earlier warnings and suggestions raised by

opposition parties were ignored by the Education Ministry. He urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi either to seek Pradhan's resignation or dismiss him from the Cabinet.

The controversy has also intensified political reactions in Odisha. Both the Biju Janata Dal and the Indian National Congress have launched strong attacks on Pradhan.

While Congress protests were expected, political circles are closely watching the aggressive posture adopted by the BJD, which has organized demonstrations through its youth and student wings. Effigies of the Union minister have reportedly been burnt in several places across the

state.

Former Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik also entered the debate with social media remarks criticizing the examination controversy and expressing concern over its impact on students. His intervention is being seen as significant because he had rarely reacted strongly against Pradhan in the past. Political observers have often speculated about a tacit understanding between the two leaders, but recent developments suggest relations may have changed.

Within the Odisha BJP, discussions about factional rivalry have resurfaced. Political insiders claim that supporters of state BJP

president Manmohan Samal, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, and MP Baijayant Panda are not aligned with Pradhan's camp. Observers say these groups may now see an opportunity to reduce his political influence within the party.

Pradhan was once regarded as the BJP's most influential leader in Odisha, especially when the party was out of power in the state. However, after the BJP formed the government in Odisha, many believe his prominence within state politics has gradually declined. Several of his supporters are reportedly no longer being given important organizational responsibilities or

positions in government.

The debate over Pradhan's political standing had already begun when he was assigned the Education Ministry in the Union Cabinet, with some interpreting it as a reduction of his influence at the national level. Critics also point to previous incidents of examination paper leaks under the education system, arguing that repeated controversies have contributed to growing dissatisfaction with his leadership.

As protests continue and political attacks intensify, the NEET paper leak controversy is emerging as one of the most serious challenges faced by Dharmendra Pradhan in recent years.

President Droupadi Murmu approves increase in sanctioned strength of judges in SC from 33 to 37



New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu has approved an increase in the sanctioned strength of judges in the Supreme Court from 33 to 37, excluding the Chief Justice of India, through the promulgation of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026.

According to the gazette notification, published by the Law and Justice Ministry, the ordinance amends the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956. With this amendment, the total strength of the apex court, including the Chief Justice of India, will rise to 38 judges.

Concern Mounts Over Falling Water Level in Hirakud Reservoir

Only 25% storage capacity available; evaporation loss touches 874 cusecs

Sambalpur-17/05(DMS) : Hirakud Dam is witnessing a steady decline in water level, raising concerns over future water availability for irrigation, drinking water and power generation. Despite all 98 gates remaining closed, the reservoir currently holds only around 25 percent of its total storage capacity.

According to the latest daily water status report, the reservoir water level stood at 605.85 feet on May 16, nearly one foot lower than the corresponding period last year when it was recorded at 606.85 feet. The total stored water is estimated at around 1.00 million acre-feet, which is roughly one-fourth of the reservoir's

capacity. Official data revealed that while the reservoir received an inflow of 2,794 cusecs, the outflow was much higher at 7,897 cusecs. Of the total discharge, 5,435 cusecs were utilized for power generation, 1,323 cusecs for irrigation and 265 cusecs for industrial and drinking water purposes.

However, the most worrying aspect is the massive evaporation loss from the reservoir. Reports indicate that nearly 874 cusecs of water is being lost daily due to evaporation.

Power generation from the reservoir also continues at a significant level. A total of 59.416



megawatts of electricity was generated, including 34.958 megawatts from Burla Power House and 24.458 megawatts

from Chiplima Power House. During the current water year, overall power generation has reached 1,126.465 million units

against the target of 1,174 million units. The situation further worsened on May 17, when the water level dropped to 605.67 feet, about 1.08 feet lower than last year's level for the same day. Water inflow declined to 1,913 cusecs, while outflow remained high at 7,289 cusecs. Evaporation losses also continued at around 870 cusecs. Experts fear that if the present trend continues, the region may face severe water stress during the coming summer and kharif season. The continuous decline in water level has intensified concerns over irrigation supply, drinking water availability and future hydroelectric power generation from the reservoir.

Major Crackdown on Petrol Pumps in Puri, Administration Launches Inspection Drive

Puri: In a major administrative action, the district administration on Sunday conducted a special inspection drive at several petrol pumps across the city. The initiative was carried out under the directions of District Magistrate Divya Jyoti Parida.

Additional District Magistrate (Revenue) Sharat Chandra Mahapatra inspected fuel stations in different parts of Puri and reviewed the available stock of petrol and diesel. Officials also examined the manner in which fuel was being supplied to consumers.

During the inspection, the ADM instructed petrol pump operators to ensure proper customer service and prevent any form of black marketing. He also advised the Chief Supply Officer to maintain strict monitoring of the situation.

Chief Supply Officer Sanjib Sahu and other officials were present during the drive. Sub-Collector Rajkishore Jena, along with all teshildars, assistant supply officers, marketing inspectors and police personnel, also inspected petrol pumps across the district and issued necessary directions.



Garbage Pile Near Public Toilet Triggers Stench on Puri Grand Road



Puri: Poor sanitation and heaps of garbage on the busy Bada Danda stretch in Shreekhetra Puri have sparked resentment among local residents, shopkeepers and devotees. A pile of waste lying unattended for the past four days near a public toilet in front of Bagh Akhada Math inside the Badashankha vegetable market has led to foul smell spreading across the area.

Locals alleged that despite the daily movement of sanitation workers in the locality, the garbage has not been cleared. The unhygienic condition in one of the town's busiest religious and commercial zones, frequented by thousands of pilgrims and tourists, has raised serious concerns.

Traders said the poor

sanitation on the Grand Road was not only affecting business but also tarnishing the image of Shreekhetra Puri, a major pilgrimage destination. Shopkeepers complained that customers were facing considerable inconvenience due to the unbearable stench.

Residents have urged the Puri Municipality to immediately remove the accumulated waste, ensure regular cleaning operations and introduce daily garbage collection in markets and public places.

Several citizens' groups have also appealed to the administration to undertake special cleanliness drives and maintain strict monitoring in view of the convenience of pilgrims and tourists visiting the holy town.

Brother who visited his sister's house for Sabitri, found dead

Keonjhar : A 32-year-old man from Raikala village under Patna police station, who had come to his sister's house in Kadagada village under Sadar police station, for the Savitri puja on Friday was found dead suspiciously in a forest near Bhatunia village, under the Sadar police station area on Saturday. The deceased has been identified as Lalatendu Dehuri, (32), of Raikala village, Rajnagar panchayat, Patna block. After getting the information police rushed to the spot on Saturday afternoon, seized the body and initiated investigation.

According to sources, Lalatendu's sister, Tapaswini, married Sanjay Kumar Dehuri in Kadgarh village, under Sadar

police station, few years back. He had come to Kadagada with some puja items on the occasion of Savitri puja on Friday. On Saturday, he went out from the sister's house to return to his village but never came back. After searching for him, his dead body was recovered from the forest near Bhatunia village at around 2 pm. Upon receiving information, the police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to the District Headquarters Hospital for an autopsy. Suspecting that he was murdered by a group, the deceased's brother-in-law Sanjay gave a complaint in Sadar police station. Based on the complaint, the police have registered a case and are investigating. Police have not yet ascertained the exact

cause of death and have not arrested anyone in this connection.

The District Police Headquarters informed after conducting a preliminary investigation in a press release on Sunday that on Saturday between 9 am and 10 am, Lalatendu left his sister's house to return home. Then his dead body was found in the forest area of Bhatunia village. A police scientific team reached the spot and conducted an investigation. However, during the preliminary investigation there were no signs of assault or internal/external injuries on his body. Therefore, an investigation is underway from all angles and the real reason will be known after the investigation.

Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrests immigration consultant in 1.83 crore visa fraud

New Delhi : The Cyber Cell of the Delhi Police Crime Branch has busted a major immigration fraud racket involved in cheating people on the pretext of providing Canada visas and work permits. Police have arrested an immigration consultant accused of duping a woman of ₹1.83 crore.

According to the Crime Branch, the accused lured the victim by promising Canada immigration, a work permit, and business ownership opportunities. He allegedly claimed that he would help the woman settle permanently in Canada.

Police investigation revealed that despite repeated visa rejections, the accused continued giving false assurances and kept collecting huge amounts of money in multiple instalments. He is also accused of diverting the funds through various bank transactions and cash withdrawals.

The Cyber Cell arrested the accused

Earlier on Friday, Delhi Police Crime Branch arrested a proclaimed offender carrying a reward of Rs 50,000 from Anantnag in Jammu and Kashmir in connection with a fraud case registered at Mahendra Park Police Station. The accused had been absconding for several years and was constantly changing his hideouts and SIM cards to evade arrest.

based on technical surveillance and analysis of the banking trail. Police are now investigating the involvement of other people linked to the racket and trying to ascertain how many more victims may have been cheated similarly.

In a separate case, the Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police has cracked

two separate cases of GST fraud. A network of shell companies involved in layering funds through multiple accounts has been busted. The accused used victims' credentials to perpetrate a multi-crore financial crime, according to the police.

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According to Delhi Police, the Crime Branch team had been tracking the accused for a long time. During the investigation, police relied on decade-old mobile data analysis, technical surveillance, and ground intelligence to trace him.

Medicine Shops Across Nuapada District to Remain Closed On May 20

NUAPADA/KHARIAR ROAD, 17/05 : As per the direction of Utkal Chemists and Druggists Association, the Nuapada Chemists & Druggists Association has announced a districtwide shutdown of all medicine shops on May 20 to protest against the growing online sale of medicines.



The association strongly opposed the online trade of drugs, stating that it poses a serious threat to the livelihood of thousands of chemists and their employees.

The Secretary of Nuapada Chemists & Druggists Association Inderchand Jain said that the NCDA represents around 300 medicine traders across Nuapada, who support nearly 24000 families. While the online sale of medicines is rapidly increasing, it is pushing traditional drug stores and their employees out of business.

Our key demands are to stop online sale of medicines, to stop deep discount by Corporates and to avoid spurious medicine, he added.

BJP Begins Panchayat Mission; Congress and BJD Yet to Find Momentum

BJP Strengthening Grassroots Network Through Organisational Training.

Sambalpur-17/05(DMS) : Political activities ahead of the upcoming Panchayat elections have started gaining momentum in Sambalpur district, with the Bharatiya Janata Party intensifying its grassroots preparations to capture local bodies. The party has reportedly prepared a detailed organisational blueprint and is focusing on Mandal-level training programmes to strengthen district units before the elections.

Party leaders, including MLAs, MPs, district presidents and organisational in-charges, are being assigned specific

responsibilities through a series of review and training meetings. Sambalpur district BJP president Ram Chandra Meher is said to be actively coordinating the campaign strategy. The party leadership has directed workers to complete booth-level committees at the earliest and maintain close coordination between elected representatives and organisational leaders.

Sources said the BJP plans to hold regular meetings at every organisational level. Parliamentary core committee meetings are expected every month, while Mandal, district, Shakti Kendra and



booth meetings will reportedly be conducted in a phased weekly structure. The party is also preparing lists of potential candidates for all Panchayat-level posts, including ward members, sarpanches, samiti members and zilla parishad seats.

With Panchayat elections likely within a year, the BJP has already intensified its groundwork from the grassroots level. In contrast, both the Biju Janata Dal and the Indian National Congress are perceived to be lagging behind in organisational

preparedness.

Political observers believe the biggest challenge for the BJD is the gradual shift of several Panchayat representatives towards the BJP after the 2024 general elections. In many areas, local representatives who were

earlier associated with the BJD have reportedly aligned themselves with the BJP. Though former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is making efforts at the state level to retain the party base, its impact at the district level is said to be minimal.

The district-level BJD organisation is yet to be fully restructured, and many block committees reportedly continue in their old form. Worker mobilisation programmes and district-level organisational activities have also remained limited. The Congress, though comparatively more active in

some areas, is yet to establish a strong presence on the ground. Party leaders, however, claim that booth-level preparations have already begun and that the party will soon launch public outreach campaigns on various issues against the government.

Although the BJP did not achieve major success in the previous Panchayat elections, the political scenario appears to have changed significantly after the 2024 elections. The increasing inclination of Panchayat representatives towards the BJP is now emerging as a noticeable political trend in the district.

Gautam Nayak Elected President and Bishwaranjan Palai as Secretary in Jagannath Truck Owners' Association Election



Paradip – The election of the Paradip Jagannath Truck Owners' Association was conducted peacefully on Sunday at the association office premises. A tough contest was witnessed between the two major groups led by Gautam Nayak and Sudhir Jena.

In the election, Gautam Nayak was elected as President by securing 277 votes, while his nearest rival Sudhir Kumar Jena received 260 votes and was defeated by a margin of 17 votes.

Similarly, Saroj Mahapatra was elected as Working President with 282 votes, Bhagaban Swain as Vice-President with 287 votes, Bishwaranjan Palai as Secretary with 288 votes, Manoj Kumar Biswal as Joint Secretary with 272 votes, and Balaram Das was elected as Treasurer with 269 votes.

Although disputes had continued within the association for a long time, this election reflected a mixed outcome representing both groups.

Liquor consumption in front of Liquor shop restricted



Jagatsinghpur, Since long license Foreign liquor shop 200 mtrs away from Collectorate and 300 MTRS away from Sadar Police station allowed to consume liquor in front of Liquor shop. Even food supplement stall for liquor consumption open by encroaching Govt. Land causing problem for communication. Even Purohit pur to Dus number canal road create problem by

intoxicated people. After a long gap To-day Jagatsinghpur Collector, SP, Tahasildar with Police force started measurement of road and evacuate encroachment. Even collector warned the liquor shop owner to stop the habit of open drinking of alcohol in front of Liquor shop. If such complain will made in future then collector will cancelled the licence of Foreign liquor shop.

Minor lost hand, Mother lodged complaint

Keonjhar: A 14 years old boy lost hand after came in contact with 11 kv live wire while covering a sand loaded hyva.

In this incident, the victim's mother has lodged a complaint in the Nandipada police station. His mother requested the police to take strict action against the person who engaged her in such dangerous work.

According to the complaint a person called her son at night while she was sleeping in her house to cover the hyva with a tarpaulin. The minor is identified Somyajit Sahu (14), son of Sadananda Sahu of Elkanian village under

Salanian panchayat of Nandipada police station in Keonjhar district

According to the information, he was seriously injured when he came into contact with an 11 KV electric wire while covering the roof of a sand-laden highway truck (OD-09P-7744) near Habaleswar High School on March 11.

On receiving information about the incident, the family members reached the spot and rescued Somyajit in a critical condition. Later, he was admitted to the Salanian Community Health Center. However, as his

condition was critical, the doctors shifted him to the Bhadrak District Head Hospital and then to the SCB medical college Hospital in Cuttack. Since his condition there was more serious, the family members admitted Somyajit to the Bhubaneswar.

Due to the accident, the minor's right hand was completely burnt and the hand was amputated and he returned home after 40 days in the hospital.

The minor's mother, Soudamini Sahu, has filed a complaint with Nandipada police station on 13.05.2026 against Jogendra Behera of



Elkanian village under Salanian panchayat and his son Subhashish Behera, who engaged the minor in such work at night.

Based on Soudamini's

complaint, without her knowledge, Jogendra's younger son Subhashish called Somyajit from his mobile (No. 7848893299) on the day of the incident and lured him with money and invited him as a helper for the vehicle. As Soudamini's family is very poor, and her husband supports the family by as a car mechanic. According to Soudamini Jogendra had promised to provide all the necessary funds for Somyajit's treatment, he has so far given only 60 thousand rupees. Soudamini has alleged that Jogendra and his son

Subhashish are no longer cooperating with her, even though they require Rs 17 lakh to get their son's hand tied.

Based on Soudamini's written complaint, the Nandipada police station has registered a case against Jogendra and his son Subhashish under different sections including Section 14(1) of the Child and Juvenile Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. The local residents have demanded strict action against the culprits for forcing a 14-year-old minor to do such dangerous work.

NIT Rourkela Scientist Honoured with Prestigious 'INSA Associate Fellowship'

Rourkela: Prof. Bhaskar Kundu, Associate Professor in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the National Institute of Technology Rourkela, has been selected as an INSA Associate Fellow (IAF) for the year 2026 by the Indian National Science Academy (INSA), the apex body of scientists in India.

Notably, Prof. Kundu is the only scientist selected in the field of Earth & Environmental Sciences by the INSA Sectional Committee for the prestigious recognition this year, highlighting the significance of his research contributions at the national level.

Prof. Kundu has been recognised for his outstanding contributions in solid earth geophysics, particularly in the areas of kinematic and dynamic modelling. His research has significantly advanced the understanding of various geodynamic and geological processes in Central India. Through his scientific investigations, he has contributed



substantially to strengthening knowledge in earth system sciences and geophysical studies relevant to the Indian subcontinent.

Also a 'Humboldt Research Fellow', Prof. Kundu earned his PhD in Geophysics and has established himself as a leading researcher through academic excellence, impactful publications, and contributions to teaching and scientific advancement.

The Indian National Science Academy (INSA), established in 1935 under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, is the country's apex scientific body representing all branches of science and technology. Initiated in

2024, the 'INSA Associate Fellows (IAF)' programme recognises outstanding mid-career scientists for their notable contributions to science, engineering, medicine, and technology. Each year, a maximum of 20 scientists are selected through a rigorous evaluation process conducted by specialised INSA Sectional Committees.

Congratulating Prof. Kundu on this remarkable achievement, the Director of NIT Rourkela, Prof. K. Umamaheshwar Rao, said, "Prof. Bhaskar Kundu's selection as an INSA Associate Fellow 2026 is a matter of pride for the institute. His dedication to advancing research in Earth and Atmospheric Sciences and his impactful contributions to geophysical studies reflect the high standards of academic and scientific excellence upheld at NIT Rourkela. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to him and wish him success in his future research endeavours."

Odisha: Sashmita murder case, Supari killer held from Bihar

Jagatsinghpur: Police have resolved the brutal murder of a 24-year-old woman, Sashmita Das, after arresting the fugitive Supari killer from Bihar, and the alleged murderer was forwarded to jail on Saturday. Earlier, the deceased woman's alleged former lover, Suryakanta Swain alias Papu, was arrested and is now serving as an under-trial at Aalipingala sub jail here, informed Jagatsinghpur superintendent of police in a press conference held at police headquarters.

The accused Supari killer, named as Lallu Kumar alias Lallu Yadav [26], a resident

of Khadiha village under Kaimur district of Bihar, was picked up by Odisha police on May 14, 2026, at Bhojpur and subsequently brought to Jagatsinghpur police station on Friday after performing legal formalities, SP said.

Meanwhile, one Hyundai car, two mobile phones, one PAN card, and an ATM card have been seized from the accused Supari killer. During the course of police interrogation, he confessed to the crime being committed in collaboration with Suryakanta Swain on April 20, 2026. During the course of police questioning, the accused Supari killer Lallu Kumar

revealed that he was working in the company where Suryakanta works, a deal was finalised with him killing Sashmita, as a consequence, Suryakanta will pay him Rs 2 Lakh an advance of Rs 20,000 had been funded. As per plan, Suryakanta and supari killer Lallu Kumar reached Jagatsinghpur on April 18, 2026, and resided in a lodge, later purchased an iron chopper to kill Sushmita.

On April 20, 2026, in the afternoon, Suryakanta contacted the deceased Sushmita and wished to meet him near the Pakanpur warehouse. After the meeting, he will return to Jamsheedpur.

Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrests immigration consultant in 1.83 crore visa fraud

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According to the Crime Branch, the accused lured the victim by promising Canada immigration, a work permit, and business ownership opportunities. He allegedly claimed that he would help the woman settle permanently in Canada. Police investigation revealed that despite repeated

visa rejections, the accused continued giving false assurances and kept collecting huge amounts of money in multiple instalments. He is also accused of diverting the funds through various bank transactions and cash withdrawals. The Cyber Cell arrested the accused based on technical surveillance and analysis of the banking trail. Police are now investigating the involvement of other people linked to the racket and trying to ascertain how many more victims may have been cheated similarly. In a separate case, the Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police has cracked two

separate cases of GST fraud. A network of shell companies involved in layering funds through multiple accounts has been busted. The accused used victims' credentials to perpetrate a multi-crore financial crime, according to the police. Earlier on Friday, Delhi Police Crime Branch arrested a proclaimed offender carrying a reward of Rs 50,000 from Anantnag in Jammu and Kashmir in connection with a fraud case registered at Mahendra Park Police Station. The accused had been absconding for several years and was constantly changing his hideouts and SIM cards to evade arrest.

More Than Minerals – How Sijimali Reflects Odisha's Mining-Led Progress

Bhubaneswar: Odisha's economic rise is best explained in a single recent development. In March 2026, it topped the 2nd edition of the NITI Aayog Fiscal Health Index, which assessed Indian states on their fiscal performance, helping them identify vulnerabilities and respond with evidence-based policymaking. The report found Odisha's fiscal health to be the best in the country, with strong revenues, low deficits, and disciplined public spending. The real story behind the numbers, however, lies in how this transformation has been firmly anchored in the state's mineral wealth.

Resources such as coal, iron ore and bauxite, of which Odisha has vast reserves, have done more than just supply the state's industries. They have shaped its public finances and enabled sustained investments in urban and rural infrastructure. Industry today contributes over 40 percent of Odisha's output, with mining and metals underpinning its foundation. Indeed, the Odisha Economic Survey 2025-26 also underscores how the sector generates nearly 80 percent of the state's total non-tax

revenue.

Within this scenario, the Sijimali bauxite project, which straddles the districts of Rayagada and Kalahandi takes on broader significance. Awarded to Vedanta through auction in 2023 and currently undergoing statutory approvals, it represents the next phase in a model that has already reshaped much of the state's economy. As one of India's highest premium auctioned mines with an approved production capacity of 9.0 million tonnes per annum, the project is expected to contribute nearly INR 4,000 crore every year in auction premium, mineral royalties, District Mineral Foundation (DMF), etc.

At a national level, the significance of bauxite has also evolved considerably. Aluminium is increasingly central to India's energy transition and manufacturing ambitions, with demand rising across sectors such as infrastructure, electric mobility, renewable energy, power transmission, defence and aerospace. In this context, securing long-term domestic bauxite resources assumes strategic importance for India's industrial growth and mineral security.

A closer look at Sijimali

project's development plans reveals how such mineral resources can be sustainably leveraged to play a direct role in supporting the state's socio-economic growth.

The Sijimali plateau is characterised by difficult terrain and relatively low soil moisture retention across several stretches, factors that have historically constrained dense vegetation and agricultural productivity in parts of the region. While a part of the project area is classified as forest land, tree density remains low across much of the site, with the underlying bauxite limiting water percolation. Across the entire mine lease area of roughly 1,549 hectares, fewer than 2,933 trees have been recorded.

The environmental approach proposed by Vedanta in the project's mine development roadmap takes these factors into account. Plans include large scale afforestation, with over 22 lakh indigenous trees to be planted within the lease area and on degraded land beyond it. Together, these measures aim to significantly expand green cover over time, reshaping the ecological profile of the region.

Water availability presents another dimension



of the plateau's constraints. Rainfall is part of the local climate cycle, yet retention remains limited, with only a small proportion of surface runoff reaching catchment areas. Vedanta's planned interventions include setting up a network of contour bunds, check dams, and drainage channels extending over several kilometres, designed to slow runoff and improve recharge by nearly 300% in the region. The intent is to strengthen local water systems in a region where availability has long remained inconsistent.

Mining activity in this setting involves surface extraction, with bauxite deposits being quite shallow, located close to the topsoil; at a maximum depth of 150 feet to be specific, far above

the 750-850 feet at which groundwater in the region lies. Excavation depth is therefore expected to be limited, allowing land to be restored progressively alongside ongoing operations. Mined areas will be refilled and afforested in phases, with the aim of completely greening them over time.

"Mining today is not approached as a one-time intervention," a Vedanta spokesperson said. "Our focus is on a full lifecycle approach, where operations, community and ecology progress together, with long-term outcomes in mind."

The human context adds another layer to the mine's development plans. The mine's rehabilitation framework outlines quality housing, infrastructure, and

compensation options in line with statutory provisions. Eighteen villages fall within the broader lease area, while relocation will be limited to two villages comprising around 151 families. Vedanta has committed to housing the relocated families in newly developed, high-quality colonies designed to preserve their way of life. Each family will receive a 2BHK house, built over 0.1 ha (10 decimal) area, complete with kitchen garden in the front and a cattle shed in the back. Two housing colonies will be constructed in Kalahandi and Rayagada each, featuring amenities such as community centres, chaupal, school, dispensary, temple, fair-price shopping complex, veterinary clinic, and even a cremation ground. The rehabilitation framework envisages substantial investment towards housing, civic amenities and social infrastructure for families being relocated, reflecting the project's long-term resettlement commitment. The company has indicated that the cost to develop each family dwelling will be around INR 2 crores.

Beyond relocation, the

long-term challenge faced by the region is one of survival, owing to limited livelihood opportunities. Agriculture is often marginal, influenced by the adverse terrain and soil conditions. Practices such as poduchaas, a form of shifting cultivation done by burning trees and cultivating crops, continue as a means of subsistence, though they place pressure on local ecology. High levels of migration to other states for work has become a recurring pattern, particularly among younger residents.

"Many of us go outside for work after the farming season," said a resident from a nearby village. "If there is work here, closer to home, I would of course prefer to stay."

It is estimated that the mine will help create around 1,500 direct and indirect employment opportunities over the project's lifecycle, alongside diverse roles in associated logistics, services, and local enterprises.

The distribution of benefits has also been shaped by policy. The project's contributions to the District Mineral Foundation of around ₹30 crore annually, are expected to channel significant funding into local development, with nearby

communities directly benefiting. They will support added improvements in access to healthcare, education, water access, and infrastructure. Already, Vedanta has deployed several developmental initiatives in the region, including Mobile Health Units serving over 50 villages, smart classrooms under the Gyan Jyoti programme, Nand Ghars (modern anganwadis), safe drinking water projects and women's livelihood programmes, demonstrating Vedanta's long-term commitment to these communities.

The state's position at the top of the Fiscal Health Index reflects the cumulative outcome of a sustainable mining trajectory, where mineral revenues have supported disciplined finances and sustained investment over time. Sijimali sits within this larger arc. It extends an established model into a region that has so far remained at the margins of progress, linking local realities with state level priorities. The project's significance lies not only in the resources it unearths, but in how it is poised to connect economic opportunity with tangible development.

Energy Security

DAYS after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for reducing fuel consumption, the prices of petrol, diesel and CNG have been hiked — for the first time in more than four years. The increase had looked imminent amid surging global crude prices triggered by the war in West Asia. It's obvious that the Assembly elections in West Bengal and other states prompted the government to delay the inevitable. The writing was on the wall after the PM urged the people of the country to tighten their belts.

The government has defended the price hike by pointing to mounting losses faced by oil marketing companies. According to reports, public sector retailers were losing around Rs 1,000 crore daily while crude prices hovered above \$100 per barrel. However, this explanation alone cannot convince citizens already grappling with inflation and stagnant incomes. Economic decisions driven by electoral cycles rather than market realities don't inspire public confidence. For millions of middle-class families, farmers and people running small businesses, higher fuel rates quickly translate into costlier food, transport and essential goods.

The bigger concern is that India's heavy dependence on imported crude leaves the economy dangerously exposed to geopolitical shocks. New Delhi's attempt to secure discounted Russian crude has provided temporary relief, but even that avenue remains vulnerable to sanctions, shipping disruptions and diplomatic pressures. The crisis raises questions about India's long-term energy strategy. The government is insisting on reducing dependence on imported oil, yet progress in public transport expansion, electric mobility and renewable energy adoption remains uneven. Fuel taxes continue to contribute heavily to government revenues, leaving consumers trapped between global volatility and domestic taxation. What India needs today is a comprehensive energy security policy. After all, resilience in the energy sector is a strategic necessity.

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.

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Trump–Xi Summit for Global Peace

Madhusudan Mishra, IAS, Retd.

The state visit of United States President Donald Trump to China from 13 to 15 May 2026 has emerged as one of the consequential diplomatic developments of the decade. At a time when the international order is facing prolonged conflict, economic uncertainty, technological rivalry, and rising geopolitical polarization, the summit between President Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a powerful message to the world that dialogue between major powers remains the most effective instrument for preserving global peace.

The visit carried enormous symbolic and strategic importance. It marked President Trump's second official visit to China, following his earlier trip during his first presidency in 2017. Nearly a decade had passed since an American President last travelled to China, and therefore the international community watched the summit with attention. The image of Trump and Xi standing together in Beijing represented far more than diplomatic ceremony. It reflected the reality that the future direction of the twenty-first century will be shaped significantly by relations between the United States and China.

President Trump received a grand welcome in Beijing and was formally greeted by President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People. Extensive bilateral discussions were held in the presence of senior officials from both countries. The talks reportedly covered critical issues including strategic stability, trade relations, military communication, artificial intelligence, technological cooperation, climate concerns, regional security, and the urgent need to reduce escalating geopolitical tensions. Most importantly, President Xi announced that both nations had agreed to pursue a "constructive China–United States relationship of strategic stability." This



declaration attracted global attention because it indicated a conscious effort to move away from confrontation and toward structured engagement and responsible competition.

One of the most memorable moments of the visit was the appearance of Trump and Xi at the historic Temple of Heaven in Beijing. The symbolism of this event was profound and deeply civilizational. It represented not only China's cultural heritage but also the recognition by both leaders that peace, continuity, and mutual respect are more enduring than rivalry and conflict. President Trump became only the second sitting American President after Gerald Ford to visit the Temple of Heaven while in office.

The summit assumes even greater significance against the backdrop of the prolonged Russia–Ukraine War. The conflict has disrupted global energy markets, affected food security, weakened economic recovery, and deepened divisions among geopolitical blocs. Both Washington and Beijing understand that an extended war benefits nobody. While China has maintained close strategic ties with Russia and the United States has remained one of Ukraine's strongest supporters, the Trump–Xi dialogue has revived hopes that fresh diplomatic channels for peace negotiations may emerge.

The summit is equally significant for India, which today occupies an increasingly influential position in global affairs. India maintains strong strategic relations with the United States while preserving longstanding defence and

historical ties with Russia. Simultaneously, India shares a complex yet important relationship with China. Any reduction in hostility between Washington and Beijing can create a more stable geopolitical environment for India, enabling it to focus more effectively on economic development, technological advancement, infrastructure expansion, regional connectivity, and its growing role as a leading global power.

For India, peace among major powers directly affects trade, investment, energy security, and strategic stability in Asia. A more cooperative relationship between the United States and China could reduce tensions in the Indo-Pacific region and lower risks of military escalation. Such stability would strengthen India's ambition to emerge as a global manufacturing hub, a leading digital economy, and a strong voice of the Global South.

The implications of the summit also extend to the Middle East and especially to Iran. China has expanded its economic engagement with Iran, while Russia has strengthened strategic ties with Tehran. If Washington and Beijing begin cooperating on broader security issues, there may be renewed diplomatic momentum toward reducing tensions in West Asia. Greater stability in the Gulf region would benefit global energy markets and provide relief to developing economies dependent on imported fuel.

Another major dimension of the visit relates to the global economy. Economic rivalry between the United States and China in recent years disrupted supply

chains, trade flows, semiconductor industries, technology transfers, and international investment. Financial markets across the world monitored the summit closely because both nations together account for a dominant share of global economic activity. Even limited cooperation between Washington and Beijing can restore investor confidence, stabilize markets, and contribute to economic recovery.

History demonstrates that visits by American Presidents to China often produce transformative outcomes. Richard Nixon's historic visit in 1972 reshaped global geopolitics and opened diplomatic relations after decades of hostility. Later engagements by Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama contributed toward strengthening strategic dialogue and economic cooperation between the two powers.

Diplomatic meetings between great leaders do not instantly solve every international crisis, but they create opportunities for communication, reduce misunderstandings, and open pathways toward peace. The Trump–Xi summit of 2026 appears to have created such an opportunity. At a time when military conflicts, ideological polarization, and geopolitical rivalry threaten international harmony, the willingness of the world's two largest powers to engage in dialogue sends a reassuring message to humanity.

In the final analysis, the Beijing summit revived hope that diplomacy still possesses the power to heal divisions, reduce tensions, and prevent the escalation of global crises. If the spirit of dialogue demonstrated by President Trump and President Xi continues in the coming years, the world may gradually move away from conflict toward a more balanced, peaceful, and cooperative international order founded upon mutual respect, strategic wisdom, and shared responsibility for the future of humanity. The Trump–Xi Summit 2026 has rekindled global hope that diplomacy, wisdom, and dialogue can overcome conflict and division. If sustained with sincerity and strategic vision, this engagement may guide the world toward greater peace, stability, cooperation, and a more balanced international order for future generations.

The blind race for marks and the loss of childhood

Dr. Priyanka Saurabh

"In this race for marks, childhood became sad.

The cloak of hope weighed heavy on the shoulders."

In a developing country like India, education has always been considered a means of respect and progress. Education not only provides knowledge, but also provides understanding of life, social awareness, and direction for a better future. However, over time, the nature of education has changed, and today, the situation has become such that education is simply about scoring high marks and outdoing the competition. Children are evaluated not on their personality, behavior, creativity, or sensitivity, but on their marksheet percentage. As a result, childhood is groaning under the burden of pressure, stress, and expectations.

Today, every parent wants their child to top the class, score the highest marks, and achieve a prestigious position in society. This desire is natural, as every parent wants a bright future for their children. The problem begins when this desire becomes an expectation, and this expectation gradually turns into pressure. Little attention is paid to the child's interests, abilities, and pursuits. The primary concern becomes marks and rank.

The current education system has made children's lives highly competitive. In addition to schoolwork, coaching, tuition, online classes, and assignments have taken up most of their day. Earlier, children played in the fields in the evenings, climbed trees, and laughed and ran with friends, but today their childhood is confined between books and screens. The playground has been reduced to a mobile screen, and worry about results has replaced free-spirited laughter.

Every year, after exam results are announced, society's behavior further impacts children's mental health. Children who score high marks are often labeled "brilliant" by society, while those who score relatively low are often seen as inferior. This comparison creates a sense of inferiority in children. Many become overwhelmed with stress, depression, and fear. Sadly, some children even resort to

suicide due to exam failure. This situation indicates a failure not only of the education system, but of society as a whole.

Today, the biggest impact on children is "comparison." "Look how much Sharma's son studies," "He got 98 percent, why didn't you?"—such statements deeply hurt children's minds. Comparison never inspires; instead, it weakens self-confidence. Every child is unique in their abilities, thinking, and talents. Some may excel in music, some in sports, some in painting, and some in writing. But our education system and social thinking consider success to be limited to becoming a doctor, engineer, or administrative officer.

Another important question is whether simply scoring high marks guarantees success in life. Both history and the present bear witness to the extraordinary achievements of many great individuals despite mediocre educational attainments. Success comes not from mere bookish knowledge, but from courage, patience, creativity, sensitivity, and hard work. If education fails to transform a person into a good human being, it is incomplete.

Today's children are technologically astute, but they are becoming increasingly isolated emotionally. With both parents working, the breakdown of joint families, and the rise of mobile phone culture, children are receiving less communication and emotional support. They are unable to openly share their problems. Consequently, the pressure of exams and the future breaks them from within. Instead of being a joyful environment, the educational environment is becoming one of fear.

The growing culture of coaching institutes has also exacerbated this problem. Big advertisements showcasing the faces of toppers create the impression in children and parents that success is only achieved through fierce competition and persistent study. Children are being trained like machines. Their creativity and independent thinking are gradually being eroded. Education is no longer a learning process, but rather a marks-making factory.

The most tragic situation is when

children feel burdened by their parents' dreams. They fear that if they get low marks, they will disappoint their family. This fear weakens them mentally. Sometimes, parents unwittingly make their children feel that their love depends on their marks. What children need most is unconditional acceptance and emotional security.

We must understand that the true purpose of education is not just to get a job. The goal of education should be to develop humanity, sensitivity, morality, and self-confidence. If a child learns to help others, respect their parents, become responsible towards society, and remain mentally healthy, that is true education.

Children should be allowed to pursue their interests. If a child enjoys music, they should be allowed to pursue it. If someone is interested in sports, acting, writing, art, or any other field, they should be respected. Every talent is important. Society must understand that the world isn't just run by doctors and engineers, but also by artists, teachers, farmers, writers, scientists, musicians, and athletes.

Parents and teachers have a greater responsibility here. Instead of scolding and scaring children, it's essential to understand and motivate them. If a child fails, they should be reassured that failure isn't the end, but an opportunity to learn. Sometimes, life's greatest successes are born from failures.

Schools should also move beyond exam-centric education and focus on personality development, creative activities, and moral education. Children should be encouraged to think and understand rather than simply memorize. Education should inspire curiosity and joy, not fear and stress.

The government and society must also be serious about children's mental health. Schools should strengthen counseling systems. Parents also need to be periodically educated about the harmful effects of putting unnecessary pressure on children.

Today, we need to redefine education and success. We should see children not just as marks-making machines, but as sensitive and creative human beings. We should make them realize that their value

is far greater than their marksheet.

If we truly want to raise the next generation to be happy, healthy, and confident, we must break away from the blind pursuit of grades. Let children play, dream, fail, and then get back up and move on. Because life isn't just about test scores, it's a beautiful amalgamation of experiences, struggles, emotions, and relationships.

Ultimately it would be appropriate to say that—

"Good marks are not important, the person who becomes great is important."
(Dr. Priyanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)

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Supreme Court Judge Strength Raised to 37 | India-Netherlands Cooperation In Renewable Energy

NEWDELHI, 17/5: President Droupadi Murmu promulgated the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, raising the sanctioned strength of the apex court from 33 to 37 judges, excluding the Chief Justice of India. With the Chief Justice included, the court can now function with a total strength of 38 judges. The Union Cabinet approved the amendment earlier this month amid concerns over more than 92,000 pending cases. The ordinance aims to improve judicial efficiency and accelerate the disposal of matters. This marks the second expansion of the Supreme Court under the present Union government. In 2019, the sanctioned strength was increased from 30 to 33 judges.



The latest increase has been enabled under Article 124 of the Constitution, which empowers Parliament to determine the number of judges beyond the Chief Justice. Officials argue that rising fresh filings and

existing pendency have put enormous pressure on sitting judges. By adding four more judges, the Supreme Court can constitute more benches simultaneously. Since most matters are heard by two- or

three-judge benches, the expansion is expected to enhance hearing capacity and reduce delays. Legal experts believe the measure will provide immediate relief by improving listing schedules, reducing adjournments, and easing workload on individual judges. The ordinance also comes at a time when digital filing and post-pandemic litigation growth have sharply increased the burden on the judiciary. While the move promises short-term gains, experts caution that broader judicial reforms across subordinate courts remain essential to address systemic delays. For now, the ordinance signals the Centre's attempt to relieve pressure on the Supreme Court and deliver faster justice.

New Delhi: Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi on Sunday said that cooperation between India and the Netherlands in renewable energy, green hydrogen and energy transition will strengthen clean energy innovation, attract investments, create new economic opportunities and support India's emergence as a global green hydrogen hub. In a post on social media platform X, the minister said that collaboration in renewable energy and green hydrogen would further reinforce India's commitment towards sustainable growth, energy security and a cleaner future. "Cooperation in renewable energy, green hydrogen and energy transition will strengthen clean energy innovation, boost investments, create new economic opportunities and support India's emergence as a global green hydrogen hub," Joshi said. "These outcomes further reinforce India's commitment towards sustainable growth, energy security and a cleaner future," he stated. The cooperation framework between India and the Netherlands includes the setting up of a Joint



Working Group on Renewable Energy that will hold regular meetings to share best practices and experiences, promote knowledge of each other's industrial ecosystems and facilitate industrial partnerships in areas such as green hydrogen, bioenergy, bio-chemicals, circular feedstocks, renewables and battery storage. Both countries have also agreed to collaborate on drafting an action plan for joint activities in renewable hydrogen, including the development of a green corridor between India and the Netherlands. The proposed corridor is expected to strengthen clean energy trade links and support India's ambitions of becoming a major exporter of

green hydrogen to Europe. As part of the broader climate partnership, India and the Netherlands will explore stronger cooperation on environmental issues through another Joint Working Group focused on climate adaptation and mitigation. The initiative aims to encourage the exchange of best practices, knowledge and technology in tackling climate challenges. The two nations will also deepen bilateral cooperation in biofuels, circular economy and waste-to-energy projects through initiatives such as the Global Biofuels Alliance and the International Solar Alliance, among others.

President Murmu Approves Increase In SC Judge Strength From 33 To 37

New Delhi, 17/5: President Droupadi Murmu has promulgated the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, increasing the sanctioned strength of judges in the Supreme Court from 33 to 37, excluding the Chief Justice of India. The move is aimed at addressing the growing pendency of cases and ensuring faster delivery of justice in the country's highest court. Union Minister for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal announced the development through a post on X. "The President is pleased to increase the Judge strength of the Supreme Court from 33 to 37 Judges (Excluding the Chief Justice of India) by promulgating the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, which has further amended the 'Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956,'" Meghwal said in his post. The ordinance



comes days after the Union Cabinet approved a proposal to amend the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956. Earlier on May 5, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had cleared the proposal for introducing the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026 in

Parliament to increase the number of Supreme Court judges by four. According to the government, the decision has been taken in view of the increasing workload of the apex court and the rising number of pending cases. The expansion in judicial strength is expected to improve efficiency in disposal of matters and reduce

delays in hearings. An Act to increase the judge strength of the Supreme Court of India was originally enacted in 1956. Since then, the sanctioned strength of judges has been revised several times in line with the increasing demands on the judiciary. The judge strength of the Supreme Court was last increased in 2019, when Parliament amended the law to raise the number of judges from 30 to 33, excluding the Chief Justice of India, through the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 2019. With the latest amendment ordinance, the total sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court will now rise to 38 judges, including the Chief Justice of India. The move is being seen as a significant step towards strengthening judicial infrastructure and enhancing access to timely justice across the country.

NEET Paper Leak Case: Manisha Mandhare Sent to 14-Day CBI Custody

NEWDELHI, 17/5: A Delhi court sent NEET paper leak accused Manisha Gurunath Mandhare to 14 days of CBI custody, intensifying the investigation into the NEET-UG 2026 scandal. Mandhare, an NTA-appointed senior Botany teacher from Pune, is suspected to be the co-mastermind behind the leak of the Biology question paper. Chemistry professor P.V. Kulkarni is considered the kingpin of the operation. During proceedings at Rouse Avenue Court, the CBI stated that Mandhare conspired with Kulkarni and consultant Manisha Waghmare.

She allegedly handed the question paper to another accused, Shubham, and conducted special coaching sessions at her Pune residence, where she disclosed questions to students. The defence argued that her arrest was illegal, claiming she was detained after sundown and brought to Delhi at 1 a.m. The court allowed her to meet her counsel daily for 15 minutes. CBI officials confirmed that many of the questions disclosed by Mandhare matched the actual NEET-UG 2026 paper held on May 3, later cancelled nationwide. In the last 24 hours,

the agency conducted searches at six locations, seizing incriminating documents, laptops, bank statements, and mobile phones. So far, nine accused have been arrested across Delhi, Jaipur, Gurugram, Nasik, Pune, and Ahliyanagar. Investigators identified middlemen who mobilised students and charged lakhs of rupees for access to leaked questions. The NEET paper leak case continues to unfold, with CBI special teams tracking the source of the Biology and Chemistry paper leaks and interrogating suspects nationwide.

Delhi Police Bust Drug Supply Network, Seize 8.120 Kg Ganja; One Arrested

New Delhi, 17/5: In a major crackdown on narcotics trade, a drug supplier was arrested during a targeted operation in Delhi's Baprola area, where officials also recovered a large quantity of ganja, police said on Sunday. The operation was carried out by the Special Staff of Outer District Police. The accused has been booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. According to the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer District), "The team nabbed one drug supplier under The NDPS Act" and "8.120 kg Ganja recovered from his possession and seized." A case has been registered under the NDPS Act. The operation was initiated on May 14 after SI Vipin of Special Staff, Outer District, received secret information



that a person actively involved in supplying ganja in various areas of Delhi would arrive in the Baprola area during the evening hours to deliver the contraband. Acting swiftly on this intelligence, a dedicated police team comprising SI Vipin Kumar, ASI Murari Lal, HC Rohit, Constables Harkesh, Vijay Loura, and Anuj, under Inspector Rohit (I/C Special Staff) and close supervision of ACP Operations Virender Dalal, laid a coordinated trap in the Baprola area along with the informer. The officials further stated that the team, along with the informer, laid a well-coordinated trap at the designated location in Baprola. Soon after, a suspect carrying a blue-coloured bag was spotted. The informer positively identified him, following which the alert team tactfully intercepted and apprehended him on the spot," officials said. During questioning, the accused was identified as Altaf Alam, a 20-year-old resident of Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh. Upon checking his bag, the police recovered four packets of ganja concealed inside it. "The recovered contraband was weighed on the spot and found to be 8.120 kg of ganja, which was subsequently seized as per legal procedure," police said. Following the recovery, an FIR under the NDPS Act was registered at Ranhola police station, and the accused was arrested. Police said that the accused is being interrogated to trace the source of the contraband and identify other members of the drug supply network. Further investigation is underway to dismantle the wider supply chain operating in the region, officials said.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw virtually flags off Bengaluru-Mumbai Express train

New Delhi, 17/5: Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Sunday virtually flagged off an express train between Bengaluru and Mumbai on Sunday, marking a major step in strengthening connectivity between Karnataka and Maharashtra. Vaishnaw stated that long-pending demands of South and North Karnataka are now being fulfilled. Further, he announced that the Vande Bharat Sleeper service between Bengaluru and Mumbai is expected to start soon. Highlighting infrastructure growth, he noted a significant increase in railway funding in recent years, accelerating project execution across Karnataka. Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, 61 stations are being redeveloped at a cost of Rs 2,160 crore, with 9 already completed. Bengaluru Cantonment station is being redeveloped at Rs 485 crore, and Yeshwantpur at Rs 367 crore, and the Ministry of Railways said. Since 2014, about 1,750 km of new railway lines have been constructed in Karnataka, and complex electrification works in the Hassan-Mangaluru section



have been completed, and testing is going on. On the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project, he stated that work is progressing across all four corridors. For the Baiyappanahalli-Chikkabannavara and Heelalige-Rajanukunte corridors, land acquisition has been completed, and station works are currently in progress. The KSR Bengaluru-

Devanahalli alignment has been jointly approved by the state government and the Railways, and the geotechnical survey has been completed. The Kengeri-Whitefield alignment was recently approved, and survey work will commence shortly. And he said that the suburban rail network will integrate key hubs, including the airport, Electronic City,

Marathahalli, and Hebbal. The Railway Minister further stated that Karnataka currently operates 12 pairs of Vande Bharat trains. Testing on the Bengaluru-Mangaluru route is underway and will soon improve coastal connectivity up to Madgaon. Bullet train corridors connecting Bengaluru with Hyderabad and Chennai have also

been approved. Vaishnaw highlighted. He further noted that, with a long-term vision to connect Mumbai, Bengaluru, and other major cities, the network is expected to expand to 7,000 km. The Union Minister of State for Railways, V Somanna, while addressing the gathering during the flagging off of the train, expressed his gratitude to Vaishnaw for sanctioning the new Bengaluru-Mumbai train, stating that it will greatly benefit passengers on one of the busiest routes and further boost Karnataka's development. He highlighted that Karnataka currently operates 12 pairs of Vande Bharat trains covering 14 districts. He noted that a Vande Bharat Sleeper maintenance depot will be established at Thanisandra at a cost of Rs 270 crore, along with a chair car maintenance facility at SMVT Bengaluru costing Rs 52.73 crore. Doubling of Baiyappanahalli-Hosur (Rs 1,116 crore), Bettahallasuru-Rajanukunte (Rs 248 crore), and quadrupling works around Bengaluru (Rs 1,347 crore) are being undertaken to enhance capacity.

2nd Hike In 48 Hrs: Delhi's CNG Rate Crosses Rs 80/Kg Amid Global Oil Tensions

New Delhi, 17/5: India's leading city gas distributor Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL) on Sunday increased compressed natural gas (CNG) prices by Re 1 per kg across its network — marking the second hike within 48 hours and adding to the fuel cost burden on commuters in the Delhi-NCR region. Following the latest revision, the price of CNG in Delhi has risen to Rs 80.09 per kg, crossing the Rs 80-mark for the first time. In Noida and

Ghaziabad, CNG will now cost Rs 88.70 per kg. The latest increase comes just two days after IGL had raised CNG prices by Rs 2 per kg on May 15, taking the Delhi rate to Rs 79.09 per kg at that time. Sunday's hike has further pushed up transportation costs for private vehicle owners, cab operators and public transport users dependent on CNG. The recent CNG price revisions coincided with a broader increase in retail

fuel prices announced by the Centre on May 15. Petrol prices were raised by around Rs 3 per litre and diesel by nearly Rs 3 per litre in the national capital. Following the revision, petrol in Delhi is retailing at Rs 97.77 per litre, while diesel costs Rs 90.67 per litre. The fuel price surge comes amid escalating tensions in West Asia and the continuing blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical energy

trade routes. Nearly one-fifth of global oil and gas trade passes through the narrow passage, and supply disruptions have pushed international crude oil prices sharply higher. Responding to criticism over rising fuel costs, Kiren Rijju said India has managed to limit the increase in petrol and diesel prices despite a sharp spike in global crude prices. He noted that several countries witnessed fuel price

increases ranging from 20 per cent to nearly 100 per cent, while India's petrol and diesel prices rose by only 3.2 per cent and 3.4 per cent, respectively. Rijju added that even as Brent crude crossed the \$100 per barrel mark and global markets turned volatile, India's public sector oil marketing companies absorbed significant losses for weeks to shield consumers from a larger inflationary impact.

PM Modi's Visit To Sweden 'Very Significant': Indian Envoy Anurag Bhushan

Stockholm, 17/5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Sweden is "very significant", India's Ambassador Anurag Bhushan said on Sunday. In an interview with IANS, Bhushan noted that PM Modi's visit is also significant as it is happening in Gothenburg, a very old city of Sweden, which has now developed into a technology, industrial and innovation heart of the Scandinavian country. PM Modi will arrive in Sweden later on Sunday after concluding his visit to the Netherlands. He had earlier visited Sweden in 2018 for the first-ever India-Nordic Summit. Elaborating on PM Modi's engagements in Sweden, Anurag Bhushan said: "The Honourable Prime Minister will come today. He is coming at the invitation of Swedish Prime Minister Mr Ulf Kristersson. So, of course, he is going to have a bilateral consultation with Mr Kristersson and his leadership team. Thereafter, the Honourable Prime Minister will also have engagements with the business community of Sweden. He will also address members of the European Roundtable of Industry, which is a group of top companies



of Europe. I think it's a very significant visit. "It is the second visit by our Prime Minister. He first came in 2018. But this visit is also significant because it is happening in Gothenburg. This would be the very first visit by any Indian Prime Minister to this beautiful city, which is a very old city, set up in 1620, and it has developed into the technology, industrial and innovation heart of Sweden. It is also a centre where a lot of Indians live. So altogether it is a visit of great significance," he added. Anurag Bhushan stated that PM Modi's visit to Sweden is taking place against the backdrop of India concluding its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union. He termed

India's ties with Sweden "long-standing and diversified". "It (visit) is also happening against the backdrop of India concluding its Free Trade Agreement with the European Union and also the two other relevant FTAs, including the one with EFTA countries and the other one with the UK. I'd like to point out here that India's relationship with Sweden is a very long-standing one and a highly diversified one. We have a very rich economic partnership, in particular." "There are over 300 Swedish companies working in India, providing employment opportunities to 4 lakh people. We have 75 Indian companies working in Sweden as well. So we have a very vibrant and active

economic partnership. We are very hopeful that this visit by the Honourable Prime Minister, together with his engagement with Swedish CEOs and European CEOs, will lead to greater cooperation and opportunities between India, Indian as well as Swedish and European industries to collaborate," he added. Anurag Bhushan expressed hope that there will be greater collaboration between the two nations in advanced manufacturing, green technologies, circular economies, renewable energy and other sectors. "Beyond that, Sweden is also known for its innovation and sustainability, and this is one of the central pillars of our cooperation. So we are hopeful that we will see a lot of opportunities for further development in this direction. Already, we see greater vibrancy happening in the AI Impact Summit earlier this year. Over 80 Swedish companies participated in this event, and this was the second largest delegation. So, not just big companies, even startups and mid-sized companies also participated. So, we are going to see, hopefully, after this visit,

greater collaboration in advanced manufacturing, green technologies, circular economies, renewable energy and so on." He recalled that India and Sweden had started an innovation-based relationship during PM Modi's first visit in 2018. "When the Honourable Prime Minister came in 2018, we started our innovation-based relationship. So, innovation, sustainability, green tech, and circular economies, these have become one of the central themes of our partnership. Sweden is a world leader in innovation and in sustainability, and there are world-beating companies that have developed technologies, practices, and institutions centred around those themes. On the other hand, India provides a market that can provide the scale and space for Swedish companies to work in. So, I'm hoping that the Honourable Prime Minister's visit will galvanise a lot of Swedish industry into looking at India even more seriously than they do and look at some of the potentialities that have emerged out of our policy formulations, such as Startup India, Digital India, Smart Cities and so on."

Drone strike targets UAE's Barakah nuke plant complex, triggers electrical generator fire

Abu Dhabi [UAE], 17/5: A drone strike has targeted the United Arab Emirates' al-Dhafra region, igniting a fire at an electrical generator positioned within the sprawling complex of the Barakah Nuclear Energy Plant. The sudden aerial attack triggered an immediate activation of emergency response protocols to contain the blaze at the critical infrastructure facility. In an official public update released on X, Abu Dhabi's media office confirmed that emergency teams successfully managed the situation on the ground. The statement reassured the public that no injuries were reported and there was no impact on radiological safety levels after the fire outside the inner perimeter of the power plant. The incident has since triggered widespread international concern, even though no faction has come forward to claim responsibility for the aerial incursion. The official statement issued by the UAE notably refrained from attributing blame to any specific party for the hostile action, maintaining a cautious diplomatic stance. In a

similar vein, the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, which serves as the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, did not immediately respond to a request for comment regarding the severe security breach. The silence from global bodies underscores the gravity of the situation, given that the strike on Sunday represents the first instance where the four-reactor Barakah Nuclear Power Plant has been actively targeted during the ongoing Iran war. Geographically isolated, the critical facility is situated deep within the far western deserts of Abu Dhabi, positioned in close proximity to the border with Saudi Arabia. This unprecedented targeting marks a sharp escalation for the installation, which holds a historical distinction as the first and only operational nuclear power facility located anywhere on the Arabian Peninsula. The massive USD 20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant was originally constructed by the Emirates in technical collaboration with South Korea and successfully went online in 2020.

Everest Legend Kami Rita Breaks Own Record With 32nd Everest Summit

Kathmandu: Kami Rita Sherpa, the record holder for the highest number of ascents of Mount Everest, broke his own record by scaling the world's tallest peak for the 32nd time on Sunday. The veteran Nepali mountaineer, 55, successfully reached the 8,848.86-metre summit at 10:12 a.m. (Nepal time), during the Spring 2026 mountaineering season. Nepal's Department of Tourism said in a statement on Sunday. "Based on information received from the department's field office at Everest Base Camp, the ascent was completed while leading an expedition organised by 14 Peaks Expedition," the department said. Pasang Dawa Sherpa is his closest competitor, having reached the summit of the world's tallest peak 29 times. These two have been competing to achieve the highest number of Everest ascents. Expedition organiser 14 Peaks Expedition also confirmed Kami Rita's ascent to the summit of Mount Everest in a Facebook post. "Congratulations to the legendary Kami Rita Sherpa @kamiritasherpa on achieving an incredible 32nd successful ascent of Mount Everest today at 10:12 a.m. on May 17, 2026," the company said. The company also lauded his achievement. "At 55 years old, he once again proves that determination, experience, and resilience can continue to achieve success even at the highest peaks on Earth," it said. "Your achievement is not only a personal milestone but also a proud moment for Nepal and the global climbing community. Thank you for carrying the spirit of the Himalayas to the world." Known worldwide as the "Everest Man," Kami Rita has continued to redefine human endurance, courage, and dedication. Since his first summit in 1994, he has inspired millions through his unmatched passion for the mountains and his extraordinary contribution to Himalayan mountaineering. Born on January 17, 1970, in Thame, Solukhumbu District of Nepal, Kami Rita has been working as a high-altitude mountain guide on Everest for many years. He is currently engaged as a mountain guide on Mount Everest under Climbing Permit No. 70 issued by the Department of Tourism. He first summited Mount Everest in 1994 and has since become one of the most celebrated figures in global mountaineering.

My Visit Added New Momentum To India-Netherlands Ties: PM Modi

Amsterdam: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that his visit to the Netherlands has added new momentum to bilateral ties. He thanked his Netherlands counterpart, Rob Jetten, for the warm hospitality and for coming to the airport to see him off. PM Modi expressed confidence that the friendship between the two nations will continue to grow stronger in the years to come. Sharing glimpses of his visit on X, PM Modi said: "My Netherlands visit has added new momentum to India-Netherlands ties. From elevating our relationship to a Strategic Partnership to expanding cooperation in water resources, semiconductors, innovation, defence, sustainability and mobility, we have charted an ambitious roadmap for the future." "I express my gratitude to PM Rob Jetten for the warm hospitality and for personally coming to the airport to bid farewell. I am confident that the friendship between India and the Netherlands will continue to grow stronger in the years to come," he added. In a special gesture, Rob



Jetten saw off PM Modi at the airport as he explained for Sweden after concluding his visit to the Netherlands. Earlier in the day, PM Modi and Rob Jetten visited the Afsluitdijk Dam, a symbol of Dutch excellence in water management, flood protection and freshwater storage. "An area in which the Netherlands has done pioneering work is water resources. There is a lot the entire global community can learn from them. This morning, I had the opportunity to visit the Afsluitdijk and understand the salient features of this project. I am thankful to PM Rob Jetten for accompanying

me here," PM Modi posted on X. "We are working to bring modern technology to India aimed at helping in irrigation, flood control and expanding the inland waterway network," he added. On Saturday, PM Modi held a meeting with Jetten at the latter's official residence (Catshuis) in The Hague, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement. The two Prime Ministers held wide-ranging discussions on strengthening the India-Netherlands relationship, the ministry statement added. Reflecting the shared values and trust, as well as increasing convergence and growing

cooperation between the two countries, the leaders decided to elevate the bilateral relationship to a "Strategic Partnership". They also agreed to adopt an ambitious Roadmap for Strategic Partnership to deepen cooperation in the areas of trade and investment, defence and security, emerging and critical technologies, maritime sector, renewable energy and education, the MEA statement said. Taking note of expanding business, investment, technology and innovation partnerships, the leaders of the two countries noted that opportunities presented by the Indian growth story offer promising business prospects to Dutch companies, the statement added. Underscoring the significance of cooperation in WAH (Water, Agriculture and Health), they agreed to further intensify the Strategic Partnership on Water through collaboration on large-scale water projects. Highlighting the strong cultural relations between the two nations, Prime Minister Modi thanked the Netherlands government for facilitating the

return of the 11th-century Chola plates. In this regard, the two leaders also welcomed the collaboration between Leiden University Library and the Archaeological Survey of India, which will help advance knowledge of these historic artefacts. During his visit to the Netherlands, PM Modi attended an Indian community reception in The Hague. Addressing the gathering, Prime Minister Modi expressed appreciation for the enthusiastic and colourful reception. He praised the Indian diaspora for its contributions to the Dutch society and for serving as a living bridge of friendship between India and the Netherlands. "The Indian diaspora is a living bridge of the India-Netherlands partnership. Our decision to extend OCI Card eligibility for the Surinamese Hindustani community from the fourth generation to the sixth generation has been enthusiastically received by the diaspora in the Netherlands," PM Modi posted on X.

PM Modi Visits Afsluitdijk Dam, Praises Netherlands For 'Pioneering Work' In Water Management

Amsterdam, 17/5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Netherlands counterpart Rob Jetten visited the Afsluitdijk Dam on Sunday. Following this, PM Modi took to X and said, "An area in which the Netherlands has done pioneering work is water resources. There is a lot the entire global community can learn from them. This morning, I had the opportunity to visit the Afsluitdijk and understand the salient features of this project. I am thankful to PM Rob Jetten for accompanying me here." "We are working to bring modern technology to India aimed at helping in irrigation, flood control and expanding the inland waterway network," he added. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal noted that PM Modi's visit to the dam highlighted the relevance of Dutch expertise for India's Kalpasar Project in Gujarat. "A symbol of engineering excellence and innovation! Accompanied by PM Rob Jetten of



the Netherlands, PM Narendra Modi visited the iconic Afsluitdijk Dam, a symbol of Dutch excellence in water management, flood protection and freshwater storage," Jaiswal posted on X. "The visit highlighted the relevance of Dutch expertise for India's Kalpasar Project in Gujarat, which aims to create a freshwater reservoir and dam near the Gulf of Khambhat. The visit underscored opportunities for deeper Indo-Dutch collaboration in

climate resilience, water technology and sustainable infrastructure," he added. On Saturday, PM Modi held a meeting with Rob Jetten at the latter's official residence (Catshuis) in The Hague, the MEA said in a statement. The two Prime Ministers held wide-ranging discussions on strengthening the India-Netherlands relationship, the ministry statement added. Reflecting the shared values and trust, as well

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WHO Declares Ebola Outbreak In Congo, Uganda Global Public Health Emergency

Geneva, 17/5: The World Health Organisation on Sunday determined that the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda constitutes a "public health emergency of international concern." The WHO said on social media platform X that the outbreak, caused by the Bundibugyo virus, does not meet the criteria of a pandemic emergency. The Director-General of WHO expresses his gratitude to the leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda for their commitment to take necessary and vigorous actions to bring the event under control, as well as for their frankness in assessing the risk posed by this event to other States Parties, hence allowing the global community to take necessary preparedness actions. In his determination the Director-General of WHO has considered, inter alia, information provided by the States Parties – the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda – scientific principles as well as the available scientific evidence



and other relevant information; and assessed the risk to human health, the risk of international spread of disease and of the risk of interference with international traffic. Earlier, hundreds of suspected cases have been reported in Ituri Province, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). Xinhua news agency reported. 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. 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.

Beyond the Blackboard: How Vedanta Aluminium is Reshaping Learning in Rural Odisha

Bhubaneswar, 17/5: Inside a government school classroom in Odisha's Kalahandi district, a group of curious students watch a complex scientific concept come alive vividly on a large digital screen. Topics that were once confined to chalk diagrams and rote explanations in text are now visually engaging, and easier to grasp. This shift from passive learning to active engagement, made possible through Vedanta Aluminium's support, is transforming classrooms across rural Odisha. In districts like Kalahandi, Sundargarh and Jharsuguda, where literacy levels are at around 59%, 73% and nearly 79% respectively (as per the 2011 census), large sections of students are first-generation learners, and educational access in these regions has been largely characterised by limited teacher availability, weak foundational learning, and low classroom engagement. In such a context, learning outcomes are shaped less by access to schools and more by the quality of instruction within them. Vedanta Aluminium has been working to address this gap through a phased approach, first strengthening classroom-based teaching, and then augmenting it through digital learning tools, ensuring that technology strengthens rather than replaces strong academic foundations. Vedanta Aluminium



has launched Project Gyan Jyoti in the Sijimali region across Rayagada and Kalahandi districts, in collaboration with Avesti Learning. Covering 6 government schools and benefiting over 600 students, the initiative is supporting learning through digital classrooms, solar-powered infrastructure, and community engagement, helping improve access to quality learning environments in remote rural areas of Odisha. Under Project Vidya, launched in 2025, the company's focus has been on improving teacher-student ratios and strengthening core subject learning in Mathematics, Science, and English. Through the deployment

of 20 additional teachers across 17 government schools, the initiative has supported over 1,800 students across Sundargarh and Jharsuguda. The impact has been immediate and measurable. Attendance in intervention areas has increased from 64% to 76% in Lakhanpur block and 66% to 82% in Hemgir block, while overall student achievement has improved from 42% to 64%. Targeted academic support through reference books, is also helping students access opportunities beyond their immediate geography. In regions where many children are the first in their families to attend school, this progress is also driving

change at the household level. Regular attendance, improved learning, and structured guidance are reshaping how families view education as a pathway to opportunity. Binita Soren, a parent from Hemgir, reflected on this shift, saying, "Earlier, we only wanted our children to go to school. Now we want them to study well, acquire a good education, and move ahead in life. Vedanta's projects have made a difference in how confidently they learn and speak." Layering Digital Learning for Scale and Access building on this robust foundation, Project Vidyagraha in Jharsuguda has introduced digital learning as an

enabler. Designed as a hybrid model, the initiative combines pre-recorded lessons, app-based access, and in-person doubt-clearing sessions, extending learning beyond classroom hours. Covering 106 government high schools and reaching over 12,000 students, it allows learners to revisit concepts, study at their own pace, and prepare more effectively for board examinations. The engagement reflects this shift, with over 26,000 content views on the learning platform, indicating increasing adoption of digital tools among students who previously had limited exposure to structured e-learning. Importantly, the intervention goes beyond academics. Through career counselling, life skills sessions, and employee volunteering, the programme is helping students build awareness around subject choices, career pathways, and future opportunities, areas often inaccessible in rural schooling environments. For students, the change is visible in their performance, as well as confidence levels. Kunti Kumari, the mother of a Class 10 student from Jharsuguda shared, "Earlier, my son would struggle to understand concepts in Science. With the videos and sessions, he is able to go back home and revise again. It makes him feel more prepared for exams."

Global Oil Prices To Stay In \$90 To 110 Per Barrel Range During 2026: Moody's

New Delhi: Oil prices in the global market are likely to remain in the high range of \$90 to 110 per barrel "as there is little prospect of a swift and durable settlement between the US and Iran and with it the full reopening of the Strait of Hormuz", according to a Moody's global report on geopolitical risks. Moody's said even if safe passage in the Strait were to resume in the next six months, the oil market would remain supply-constrained, with persistently higher and more volatile energy prices and broader knock-on effects through costs, demand and financing conditions for exposed borrowers. "We now expect Brent crude in the \$90-110 per barrel range for much of this year, with significant volatility, including occasional fluctuations outside this range in response to new developments," it said in the report. Moody's said the transit flows will gradually improve, but through bilateral channels rather than a general reopening. This would allow some incremental improvement in energy transit flows from near-zero now, but the process will be slow, opaque and subject to interruption. "We expect oil importers — particularly China, India, Japan and Korea — to negotiate passage bilaterally with Iran, potentially through coordinated transit corridors such as those reportedly emerging near Larak Island and through Omani territorial waters," the report said. However, the report states that a return to pre-conflict traffic volumes in 2026 is unlikely, it said. The disruption to shipping through the Strait has become a structural supply constraint to global energy flows rather than a temporary supply shock, Moody's said, adding that it expects the disruptions to continue through autumn. Moody's also warned that persistently higher energy prices and scarcity of energy products will feed into headline and core inflation. Moody's expects inflation in India to average 4.5 per cent in 2026, up from 3.5 per cent in its earlier estimate. "This will complicate the path for monetary policy across major economies, raise production costs across energy-intensive sectors, erode household purchasing power and tighten financing conditions for exposed borrowers," the report added.



India, Netherlands Deepen Tech Partnership With Major Push In Semiconductors, AI And Research

New Delhi, 17/5: India and the Netherlands have unveiled an ambitious roadmap to deepen cooperation in emerging technologies, innovation, science and higher education, with semiconductors emerging as the centerpiece of the strategic partnership between the two countries. The agreement seeks to strengthen trusted and resilient semiconductor supply chains by expanding collaboration between industries, research institutions and governments in both nations. Building on the Memorandum of Understanding on semiconductors and related emerging technologies, India and the Netherlands will jointly explore opportunities in artificial intelligence, photonics, quantum technologies and cybersecurity while promoting technology value-chain partnerships. A major focus of the partnership is talent and ecosystem development in the semiconductor sector. The two countries will connect the Dutch Semicon Competence Centre with the India Semiconductor Mission to support startups, SMEs, scale-ups and suppliers through technology sharing, skill development and innovation-led cooperation. In a significant academic collaboration, Eindhoven University of Technology and the University of Twente have partnered with six premier Indian institutions — Indian Institute of Science, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati and Indian Institute of Technology Madras — to establish a "brain bridge" in semiconductors and related technologies. The initiative is backed by leading industry players including NXP Semiconductors, ASML, Tata Electronics and CG Semi. The two sides also agreed to intensify collaboration in scientific research and innovation by aligning national research priorities in areas such as energy materials, biomolecular and cell technologies, AI and cybersecurity through the existing Joint Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation.

Gautam Adani launches 150 crore rural vision care initiative in Bihar

Mastichak (Bihar), 17/5: Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group, today led the ground-breaking ceremony for a landmark ₹150 crore vision care initiative, rooted in his philosophy of "Seva Hi Saadhna Hai" (service is the highest form of worship). He made this announcement in Mastichak, about 70 kilometres from Patna, to create one of the world's largest rural eye care ecosystems with capacity for 3.3 lakh eye surgeries annually while training 1,000 eye health professionals every year. The initiative seeks to strengthen affordable eye treatment, rural outreach and vision care-skilling while bringing dignity, hope and the gift of sight to underserved communities across the Hindi heartland. In a post on X, Gautam Adani said "Seva Hi Sadhaana Hai" is not merely a slogan, but a guiding philosophy that must translate compassion into lasting institutions for society. "Restoring sight is not merely a medical intervention. It is about returning hope, confidence and dignity to a human life," he wrote.



Calling Bihar "a land that has historically given new consciousness and direction to the nation", he added that the newly-created trust, "Adani Akhand Jyoti Foundation", would seek to take the spirit of service born in Bihar to underserved communities across India. The Adani Foundation, the social welfare and development arm of the Adani Group, will financially support the Adani Centre for Eye (ACE) and Adani Training in Ophthalmic Medicine (ATOM)

in Mastichak, in partnership with Akhand Jyoti Foundation, a leading rural eye care institution based in Bihar. ACE will serve as an advanced treatment and surgical facility focused on affordable care, complex procedures and large-scale rural outreach, while ATOM will focus on training optometrists, ophthalmic assistants and community healthcare workers to strengthen India's rural healthcare workforce. A ceremonial flag off was done for a fleet of 10 patient

transport buses under the ACE banner to symbolise the start of last-mile vision care access across remote villages in Bihar and adjoining regions. Gautam Adani was joined by Dr Priti Adani, Chairperson — Adani Foundation and Mr Mritunjay Tiwary, Co-Founder, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Executive Trustee — Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital, in the ground-breaking ceremony. Tiwary described the collaboration with the Adani Foundation as a shared commitment to expanding affordable and accessible eye care for underserved communities across India. "I express my heartfelt gratitude to Gautam Adani-jiji for placing trust in Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital and choosing us as a partner in this transformative journey. This partnership is far beyond the creation of infrastructure. It is a shared commitment towards restoring sight, dignity, opportunity and hope for countless people living in the last-mile and underserved regions of

India. Together, we believe this collaboration will create an exponential and lasting impact on millions of lives in the years ahead." Additionally, the Adani Foundation announced plans to establish a 200-bed hospital in Pirpainti, in Bihar's Bhagalpur district, near the Adani Group's upcoming 2,400 MW ultra-supercritical thermal power plant. The hospital aims to further strengthen affordable healthcare access while extending the benefits of community outreach and treatment to larger parts of eastern Bihar. To take the transformative work of Akhand Jyoti Foundation beyond Bihar and into underserved regions across India, Gautam Adani also announced a personal commitment of ₹500 crore and the establishment of the "Adani Akhand Jyoti Foundation" to scale this long-term humanitarian and community healthcare mission across the country. The total investment outlay for the pioneering initiatives, including operational expenditure (opex), will exceed ₹700 crore

FPIs pull out Rs 13,740 crore from Indian markets amid West Asia tensions, rising crude prices

New Delhi, 17/5: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) remained net sellers in the Indian markets during the week ended May 15, pulling out Rs 13,740.89 crore across segments, according to data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL). The sustained outflows reflect cautious global investor sentiment amid escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia, rising crude oil prices, and concerns over the weakening rupee. The selling pressure was largely concentrated in equities, where FPIs withdrew Rs 12,817.11 crore during the week. Market experts believe foreign investors are turning risk-averse as the ongoing conflict in West Asia continues to disrupt global energy markets



and increase uncertainty across emerging economies. India, being a major crude oil importer, remains vulnerable to any sharp rise in global oil prices. Higher crude prices are expected to widen the country's

trade deficit and put additional pressure on the rupee, making Indian assets relatively less attractive for foreign investors. The rupee's weakening trend against the US dollar has also contributed to

the cautious approach adopted by overseas investors. A depreciating currency reduces returns for FPIs in dollar terms, often triggering capital outflows from emerging markets like India. Debt segments too witnessed outflows during the week. Debt-VRR recorded notable selling activity, while hybrid instruments also saw withdrawals, indicating broad-based caution among global funds. The week began on a weak note with FPIs recording net outflows of Rs 1,131.77 crore on May 11. Selling intensified sharply on May 12, when foreign investors pulled out Rs 7,545.99 crore, marking the steepest single-day outflow

during the week. Although FPIs briefly turned buyers on May 13 with inflows of Rs 346.37 crore, the recovery remained short-lived as selling pressure resumed in subsequent sessions. On the final trading day of the week, FPIs infused Rs 1,111.53 crore into equities, helping limit overall losses. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently urged citizens to avoid excessive buying of gold and silver and instead support financial stability measures aimed at strengthening the rupee and reducing pressure on imports. According to market experts, global uncertainties, elevated crude oil prices, and currency volatility are likely to keep FPI flows volatile in the near term.

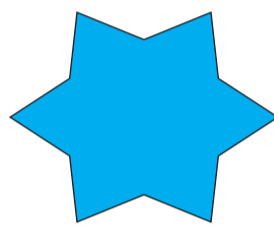
Govt Imposes Fresh Curbs On Silver Imports, Approval Now Mandatory

New Delhi, 17/5: India has tightened oversight of silver imports by shifting several categories of the precious metal from the "free" import policy regime to the "restricted" category, according to a fresh government notification issued on Saturday. Under the revised framework, imports of silver bars with 99.9 per cent purity, unwrought silver, semi-manufactured silver and silver powder will now require prior government approval before shipments can enter the country. Certain categories of imports will also continue to fall under Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regulations, adding stricter financial compliance requirements for importers. The changes have been introduced through amendments to the import policy schedule under the ITC (HS) classification and take immediate effect. The move marks a significant tightening of control over the silver supply chain, covering a wide range of products used across industrial, manufacturing and investment segments. Until now, most of these categories were imported under the "free" regime, which allowed shipments with standard regulatory clearances and limited restrictions. With the latest notification, importers will now have to seek explicit approval from authorities before bringing in consignments of bullion-grade silver and semi-processed silver products. Industry observers believe the step is aimed at improving monitoring of precious metal inflows and curbing excessive imports. The latest curbs come amid the government's broader push to reduce pressure on India's import bill and strengthen oversight of precious metals trade. Earlier, the Centre had increased import duties on gold and silver to 15 percent from 6 percent.



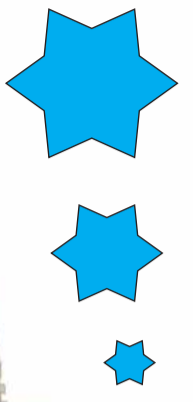
Dulquer Salmaan treats Pooja Hegde to morning coffee during '#DQ41' shoot

New Delhi, May 17: Actor Pooja Hegde on Sunday shared a behind-the-scenes glimpse from the shoot location of her upcoming romantic drama tentatively titled '#DQ41', co-starring Dulquer Salmaan. Taking to Instagram Stories, the actress posted a serene photograph featuring a mist-covered mountain landscape during what appeared to be an early morning shoot schedule. In the image, Hegde is seen holding a black travel tumbler against a backdrop of lush green hills covered in fog and low-hanging clouds. Adding a personal touch to the update, the actor thanked her co-star Dulquer Salmaan for the beverage, writing, "Morning coffee courtesy @dqsalmaan". She further captioned the scenic post with, "The views are complementary," referring to the picturesque surroundings. While the exact filming location has not been disclosed, the visuals suggest the team is currently shooting in a hillside region surrounded by greenery and misty mountains. Apart from the Dulquer Salmaan-starrer, the actress will also appear in 'Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai' alongside Varun Dhawan and Mrunal Thakur. The film is slated for a theatrical release on June 5.



Aditi Rao Hydari Captivates Cannes 2026 In Sculptural Neon Green Thigh-Slit Couture Gown

Cannes Film Festival 2026 witnessed a spectacular fashion moment as actor Aditi Rao Hydari walked the red carpet during the screening of 'El Ser Querido' wearing a striking neon metallic green gown. Designed by acclaimed international fashion house Tony Ward Couture from their Spring/Summer 2025 collection, the ensemble instantly captivated global fashion critics. Moving away from standard monochromatic tones, this outfit selection delivered futuristic elegance mixed with high-fashion drama. Every detail of the custom silhouette contributed to a masterclass in understated luxury. The one-shoulder gown featured intricate, wave-like gathered pleating across the bodice, culminating in a rose-shaped arrangement at the chest. A subtle side waist cutout complemented the dramatic, sweeping cape attached to the shoulder, while a daring thigh-high slit offered a striking fluidity as she moved. Indian actresses have historically utilized the French coast to balance traditional roots with Western couture, much like the silver screen icons of the past. Opting for restraint, the Heeramandi star paired the vibrant metallic dress with a simple diamond necklace. Luminous skin, peachy-nude lips, and soft center-parted waves completed her breathtaking presentation. Prior to this daring contemporary appearance, the performer celebrated her heritage by sporting a champagne silk tissue saree heavily inspired by traditional Mughal Chaarbagh architecture. Her ability to effortlessly pivot from rich Indian textiles to vanguard European fashion highlights her status as an international style icon.



SPORTS

Satwik and Chirag Fall Short in Thailand Open Final, Title Drought Continues

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty's wait for a title stretched further as the Indian men's doubles pair lost in the final of the Thailand Open 2026 on Sunday, May 17. The duo went down to Indonesia's Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin in straight games, 12-21, 23-25, at Bangkok. The Indonesians completed their fairytale run with the crown, defeating Satwik and Chirag for the first time in five meetings. Satwik and Chirag struggled to match the pace and precision of Carnando and Marthin throughout the contest. The Indians trailed early in the first game and failed to recover. In the second, they fought hard, saving multiple points, but the Indonesians held their nerve to close out the match. This defeat



extended Satwik and Chirag's title drought to two years. Their last triumph came at the Thailand

Open itself, making the loss even more painful. Despite consistent performances and appearances in

finals, the duo has not managed to convert opportunities into titles.

IPL 2026: Rajat Patidar Misses Out For RCB As PBKS Opt To Bowl

Dharamsala: Punjab Kings (RCB) have won the toss and elected to bowl first against Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) in the match number 61 of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 played at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium on Sunday. RCB skipper Rajat Patidar is not taking part in the match, while wicketkeeper batter Jitesh Sharma is leading the side in his absence. Suyash Sharma is replacing Patidar, while Romario Shepherd replaces Jacob Duffy. Punjab Kings have made two changes in their side as Harpreet Brar and Lockie Ferguson are back in the playing XI. After winning the toss, Shreyas Iyer said "We're going to bowl. I'm not going by the stats; we're clearly seeing how the games pan out. If we bat



and bowl well, the toss doesn't matter. I seriously had no clue that this was my 100th game as a captain, but it feels great. It feels like a great opportunity for me to win my 100th game (as captain)."

The bowling has been fantastic, but there are pressure moments where you need to execute, and so you can't change the past, nor can you anticipate

the future. The beauty is to stay in the moment, see the moment, and enjoy the pressure. Two changes for us (Harpreet) Brar and Lockie (Ferguson) come in," he added. While after losing the toss, RCB skipper Jitesh Sharma said, "We would have loved to bowl first, but the wicket is good and should play

well for 40 overs. Rajat is doing fantastic, and we should see him in Hyderabad. We are at the business end of the tournament, and I'm happy with how the team is performing, both individually and as a unit."

"Yes, we are very pleased that the team looks so stable right now. We are giving our absolute best in every department. One win tonight secures our spot in the playoffs, so it's a massive game for us. Absolutely, every game is important at this stage. This win can change the entire table—not just for us, but for several other teams as well.. Suyash replaces Rajat and Romario replaces Duffy," he added. Punjab began their campaign in dominant fashion, winning six of their opening seven matches and emerging as one of the strongest sides in the tournament.

Kamal Haasan Urges Indian Film Industry To Cut Costs Amid Global Crisis, 'Avoid Wasteful Spending'



Veteran actor and Rajya Sabha MP Kamal Haasan has sparked a major conversation in the entertainment industry after urging filmmakers to reduce unnecessary production expenses amid rising global economic uncertainty caused by the ongoing West Asia conflict. In an open letter shared on social media, the actor called on the Indian film industry to adopt a more disciplined and responsible approach to filmmaking, warning that soaring production budgets and inflationary pressures could impact both cinema businesses and audience spending habits. Highlighting the financial strain triggered by the international crisis, Kamal Haasan said the entertainment industry

must rethink its spending patterns before the situation worsens further. He wrote that the burden of rising costs should not fall on workers and technicians who contribute the most to filmmaking. Instead, he stressed the need to control "avoidable waste, poor planning, inflated entourage culture, unnecessary foreign travel, and production delays." The actor also pointed out that audience spending on entertainment could decline if inflation continues to rise, making it important for filmmakers to focus on efficiency and meaningful storytelling rather than excessive spending. Several filmmakers and producers welcomed Kamal Haasan's appeal and supported his suggestions for

cost control in the industry. Production house Vyjayanthi Movies, known for producing Kalki 2898 AD, praised the actor's vision and reposted his statement on social media. The production banner wrote that Kamal Haasan stepped forward at a crucial time to speak about "responsible measures" needed to protect the future of Indian cinema. Producer Shibu Thameens, who backed films like Puli and Saamy Square, also agreed with the veteran actor's views. However, he added that budgets often depend on the demands of the script, including locations, actors, technicians, visual scale, and post-production work. He emphasized that financial discipline should begin at the script development stage itself.

Tara Sutaria Turns Cannes 2026 Into a Fairytale in Ivory Vivienne Westwood Gown and Emerald Jewels

Actor Tara Sutaria is quickly becoming one of the standout fashion stars at the Cannes Film Festival 2026. With every appearance on the French Riviera, the actor has embraced timeless glamour, and her latest look may be her most elegant yet. For the prestigious Red Sea Film Foundation's Women in Cinema gala dinner on May 14, Tara stepped out in a breathtaking ivory gown by

Vivienne Westwood, serving vintage Hollywood sophistication with a modern couture twist. Tara's stunning ensemble featured Vivienne Westwood's signature corset-inspired silhouette that beautifully sculpted her frame. The structured bodice hugged her figure perfectly while maintaining the label's iconic couture aesthetic. The ivory satin gown came with a soft draped cowl neckline

that added romance and elegance to the overall look. Flowing into a sleek floor-length skirt, the outfit created a graceful and elongated silhouette that looked effortlessly regal. One of the biggest highlights of the ensemble was the dramatic matching stole draped delicately around her arms, adding movement and red-carpet drama to the appearance.