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PM Modi and Giorgia Meloni outline road-map for India-Italy strategic Partnership; Highlight several economic initiatives in a Joint Article

New Delhi: India-Italy ties have expanded with unprecedented momentum in recent years and have now reached a decisive stage. In a joint article written by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni, the two leaders highlighted that relations between the two countries have evolved from a cordial friendship into a Special Strategic Partnership rooted in the values of freedom, democracy and a shared vision for the future.

The leaders noted that at a time when the global order is undergoing profound changes, the India-Italy partnership is being guided

by regular exchanges at the highest political and institutional levels. They said the partnership is acquiring a new dimension by combining the economic dynamism, societal creativity and centuries-old civilisational wisdom of both nations.

The two leaders said their cooperation reflects a shared understanding that prosperity and security in the 21st century will depend on the ability of nations to innovate, manage energy transitions and strengthen strategic sovereignty.

In the article, published in two national dailies, the

leaders reaffirmed their commitment to deepening and diversifying bilateral ties by pursuing new goals and leveraging complementary strengths. They said the two countries aim to build strong synergy between Italy's design and manufacturing excellence and India's rapid economic growth, engineering talent, scale, innovation ecosystem and entrepreneurial strength, which includes over 100 unicorns and around two lakh start-ups.

The leaders added that this partnership is not merely an integration of strengths, but a co-creation



of value in which the industrial capabilities of both countries complement and reinforce each other.

The leaders said the proposed Free Trade Agreement between India and the European Union

will pave the way for greater trade and investment flows in both directions. They expressed

confidence in achieving and surpassing the target of 20 billion euros in bilateral trade by 2029, with a focus on sectors such as defence, aerospace, clean technologies, machinery, automotive components, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles, agri-food and tourism.

In the article, both leaders noted that technological innovation lies at the core of the partnership. They underlined that the coming decades will be shaped by advances in areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, advanced manufacturing,

critical minerals and digital infrastructure.

They said India's dynamic innovation ecosystem and highly skilled workforce, along with Italy's advanced industrial capabilities, make cooperation in these sectors both natural and strategic. The leaders added that growing collaboration between universities and research centres in the two countries will further strengthen the partnership. They also noted that India's digital public infrastructure model is gaining recognition in many countries, particularly across the Global South.

NCW takes suo motu cognisance of suspicious death of woman in Bhopal

New Delhi: The National Commission for Women (NCW) has taken suo motu cognisance of the reported suspicious death of a 33-year-old woman from Noida in Bhopal.

Taking serious note of the matter, NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar has written to the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police of Madhya Pradesh, directing

them to ensure a prompt, impartial and time-bound investigation. The Commission has also sought a detailed Action Taken Report within seven days. The NCW further directed authorities to ensure the safety and protection of the victim's family from any threats or intimidation so that the investigation can proceed without any pressure.

DRDO completes trials of drone launched unmanned precision guided missile

New Delhi: India has taken another important step towards strengthening its indigenous defence capabilities under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully completed the final development trials of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM)-V3, marking a significant achievement for the

country's defence sector.

The trials were conducted in both air-to-ground and air-to-air modes at the DRDO test range near Kurnool. During the tests, the missile system was operated through an advanced integrated Ground Control System (GCS) designed to automate launch and operational readiness. The trials successfully demonstrated the missile's precision strike capability, reliability and effectiveness in varied

combat scenarios.

The missile was developed by Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories. Developed entirely within the country, the project highlights the growing strength of India's domestic defence manufacturing ecosystem with the participation of MSMEs and private industries under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

For production, DRDO

has partnered with Bharat Dynamics Limited and Adani Defence and Aerospace. The missile system was integrated on UAVs developed by NewSpace Research and Technologies for the trials.

The successful completion of the tests has cleared the way for serial production of the missile system, further strengthening India's indigenous defence capabilities.

Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh has complimented the DRDO, public sector undertakings, defence production partners and industry for the successful development trials of ULPGM-V3.

He highlighted its effectiveness in air-to-ground mode for anti-tank roles and air-to-air mode against drones, helicopters and other airborne targets. Mr Singh termed it a strategic milestone achieved towards Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence.

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Transporters across Delhi-NCR to go on strike for three days from May 21

New Delhi: Transporters across Delhi-NCR will suspend operations for three days starting May 21 after the All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) called for a strike against a recent hike in environment compensation cess (ECC) on commercial vehicles and a proposed ban on older vehicles entering the Capital.

In a statement on Tuesday, AIMTC said more than 68 transport unions in Delhi-NCR had decided to join the strike, alleging that measures introduced by the Delhi government and the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) would impact transport operators and supply chains across the region.

The protest follows a revision in the ECC structure for commercial vehicles entering Delhi. Effective April



19, the cess on light commercial vehicles and two-axle trucks was increased from ₹1,400 to ₹2,000, while the levy on three-axle and heavier vehicles was raised from ₹2,600 to ₹4,000. The government also approved a 5% annual increase in the fee. Separately, CAQM has proposed banning the entry of BS-4 and older commercial vehicles into Delhi-NCR from November 1, 2026, as

part of efforts to cut vehicular pollution and divert non-destined traffic to peripheral expressways and highways. "These measures will have serious socio-economic consequences for transporters and drivers dependent on commercial vehicle operations in the region," said Rajender Kapoor, president of AIMTC. The body claims to represent around 9.5 million truckers and over 2.6 million

private bus, taxi and maxi cab operators nationwide. AIMTC argued that the ECC was being imposed on all goods vehicles entering Delhi, including those carrying essential commodities and empty vehicles arriving for loading. It also objected to the levy being imposed on BS-6 vehicles, despite such vehicles being permitted during stricter pollution control measures under the Graded Response

Action Plan (Grap) guidelines.

"We can't understand the rationale behind the proposed ban on BS-4 vehicles. These restrictions are based solely on registration category and are not scientifically justified. Restrictions should only be implemented based on actual tailpipe emissions," Kapoor said. AIMTC warned that while the proposed three-day strike was "symbolic", failure to address the transporters' concerns could lead to a larger and indefinite suspension of transport operations in Delhi-NCR.

Amid the escalating standoff, Union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari said on Tuesday that he was hopeful of resolving the issue after discussions with Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta.

Nationwide medicine shop strike, protesters demanded strict action against online medicine sale's.

Khordha-20/5- Across the country medicine shops face disruption today as the All India Organization of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD) announced a nationwide one day clouser of pharmacies.

The protest targets the online sales of medicines and calls unfair competition from large corporate backed pharmacy platforms. The president of Chemist and Druggists Association Khordha district Saroj Kumar Paikaray, demanded the withdrawal of pandemic era notifications that allegedly enabled the misuse of online medicine sale's. He claimed online platforms sell fake medicines, antibiotics and scheduled drugs without valid prescription, posing a serious health risk. Small pharmacy owners say deep discounts offered online



have crippled their business.

Discounts ranging from 20 to 50 percent make survival difficult for independent chemist. These discounts are a death knell for small retailers, said Mr. Paikaray. Khordha chemist and druggists association office bearers and members joined the press meet. Today the strike

is disrupt regular medicine purchases in khordha town, though emergency access remains unaffected. The association expressed their sorrow over the problems faced by the public due to the closure of medicine shops and expressed gratitude on behalf of the association for supporting this strike.

Greater Noida woman's death: Cops review CCTV footage of fall

Noida: Noida A day after a 24-year-old woman died after falling from the third-floor terrace of her in-laws' home in Greater Noida's Jalpura village on Monday, police on Tuesday have received the autopsy report as well as the CCTV footage of the woman falling. Investigators also inspected the house extensively.

On the intervening night of Sunday and Monday, Deepika Nagar, a B.Ed graduate and a resident of Kudi Kheda in Badalpur, Greater Noida, who was married to 25-year-old Ritik Nagar, a resident of Jalpura

in Ecotech-3, died after falling from his home. They were married in 2024.

The post-mortem report accessed by HT read: "Haematoma present in the middle and left side of the brain, bluish contusion around the right arm, elbow joint, and right thigh. Liver, spleen, right kidney, and left side of the face ruptured. Multiple abrasions on the right side of the chest and abdomen."

It stated that the cause of death would be determined after the viscera report, and the viscera was preserved to check for the

presence of any toxic substance.

A police officer involved in the investigation said, "After accessing Ritik's house key from his car, we, along with forensic teams, extensively investigated their house on Tuesday. As of now, nothing suspicious has been found. However, a CCTV camera that captured the incident was recovered.

In the video, the woman is seen falling, hitting a bunch of electric wires outside the building, and then hit the ground. It was also recorded that Deepika's



husband, Ritik, approached the spot first, followed by others, the officer said.

Police on Tuesday also recorded statements of neighbours. Nothing suspicious has come to fore so far.

The incident took place barely an hour after the woman's father, Sanjay Nagar, left their house around 11pm on Sunday. She had called her father after a dispute with her husband and in-laws.

Following the incident, her family alleged that she was assaulted and pushed from the third floor to mislead the investigation. They also alleged that her in-laws had demanded a dowry of ₹50 lakh and a Toyota Fortuner after the wedding. Police on Monday registered a case of dowry death under the BNS and the Dowry Prohibition Act against seven identified in-laws, including her husband. Hours after the incident, police arrested husband Ritik and his father Manoj from Greater Noida.

"We have formed five teams to nab the other in-laws who are on the run. They locked their home and switched off their mobile phones after the incident," said Rajeev Kumar, assistant commissioner of police, Central Noida.

The ACP added, "The post-mortem report of the woman also did not reveal the cause of death. Her viscera has been preserved to identify the exact cause."

Police on Monday refused to comment whether it was a suicide or murder. They said their

investigation is underway to ascertain the cause.

Deepika's family conducted her last rites in their native town, Kudi Kheda after the post-mortem examination.

Deepika's brother-in-law, Ankit Baisla, told HT, "It seems that the police are not taking the case seriously as no other arrests have been made yet except her husband and father-in-law. We will protest outside the DCP office if we don't get justice. We lost our family member because of continuous harassment."

Mirage of Development: People's Rights Crushed Under Rengali's Industrial Smoke

How Many More Generations Will Be Displaced in the Name of Development

Sambalpur, May 20 (DMS) : Rengali block in Sambalpur district has today emerged as a prominent name on Odisha's industrial map. The region is marked by coal mines, industrial establishments, railway transportation and the constant movement of heavy vehicles, creating an impression of rapid progress and industrial prosperity. However, behind this glittering image lies a harsh reality. Beneath the smoke rising from industries, the lives, dreams and rights of the region's original inhabitants are gradually being suffocated.

During the construction of the Hirakud Dam,

thousands of people were displaced from their ancestral lands. Many of those families later settled in the Rengali region, hoping to rebuild their lives with promises of rehabilitation and security. But tragically, these displaced communities once again became victims of displacement in the name of industrialisation. The very land on which they rebuilt their homes later became valuable for its mineral wealth, attracting mining projects and corporate interests.

The question remains what kind of development is this?

The region that contributes coal, power and

industrial output to the nation's economy continues to struggle with basic infrastructure and essential services. Many villages still lack proper roads, face drinking water shortages and have limited healthcare facilities. Smoke from industrial chimneys and dust pollution are increasingly affecting public health and damaging agricultural productivity. Rivers and ponds are reportedly facing pollution, yet these concerns often remain overlooked.

Promises that industries would generate large-scale employment for local communities have also failed to meet expectations. Many local youths continue



searching for stable jobs, while contractual employment and outside labour dominate several industrial sectors. As a

result, people who surrendered their land now often survive as temporary labourers on the very soil they once owned.

Perhaps the most painful reality is that when people raise their voices for their rights, their protests are frequently viewed not as

democratic expressions but as obstacles to development. Allegations of police pressure, legal cases and administrative action against protest movements have become familiar concerns in such industrial regions. This raises important questions about the space available for democratic dissent and people's participation in decisions affecting their lives.

Development cannot be measured merely through factory chimneys, railway lines or multi-crore industrial projects. True development means improvement in people's living standards, protection of health, access to education

and the right to live with dignity. If industrial expansion pushes communities towards uncertainty and hardship, then the very meaning of development deserves serious reconsideration. Today, the soil of Rengali asks a difficult question—how many more generations must face displacement for the country's development? How many more people will lose their rights and remain unheard? Unless people remain at the centre of development policies, the shining image of industrialisation may continue to remain nothing more than a mirage.

Balmela on Child Rights held



Bhubaneswar (20/5) : Aiming to educate the child club members on Right to education, Personal hygiene management, hand washing practices as well as Child rights were discussed at Patharbandha slum under ward no-17 of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation organised by Action Aid Association in collaboration with Center for Child and Women Development (CCWD), Bhubaneswar. The

objective of the event was to strengthen the Child club members to create a child friendly safety slum for their wellbeing said Bhaskar Chandra Pradhan. The children were actively shared their future role for their community and responsibility. Focusing to climate change and heat wave were shared by Bishnupriya Samal. More than 50 child club members attended.

NLC India's Talabira II & III OCP CELEBRATES 70th RAISING DAY AS 'GRATITUDE DAY'

Talabira II & III OCP, Sambalpur, Odisha Hosts a Solemn and Inspiring Flag-Hoisting Ceremony Marking Seven Decades of Nation-Building.

Sambalpur-20/05(DMS) : Talabira II & III Open Cast Project (OCP) of NLC India Limited (NLCIL), a 'Navratna' Government of India Enterprise, marked the 70th Raising Day of the company (recalling historical occasion, 20th of May 1957, the day NLC's mining operations were commenced) with great pride and reverence. The occasion was solemnly observed as "Gratitude Day" — a day dedicated to honouring the visionary leaders, committed workforce, and esteemed stakeholders whose relentless efforts have shaped NLCIL's remarkable seven-decades of Journey of Nation building.

The celebration commenced at the Project Office Building, Sambalpur, with the ceremonial hoisting of the NLC India Limited flag. The flag was proudly unfurled by Shri Jagadish Chandra Majumdar, Executive Director & Project Head, Talabira II & III OCP, NLC India Limited, as a

powerful symbol of the organisation's growth, progress, and its enduring commitment to the empowerment and energising of the nation.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of Shri Raghunadh Behera, Chief General Manager / Land, and Shri Subrat Kumar Biswal, Deputy General Manager / Head of Human Resources, along with a large gathering of senior officials and employees of Talabira II & III OCP. The enthusiastic participation of the workforce reflected the deep sense of belonging and pride shared across all levels of the organisation.

In a deeply symbolic gesture, senior officials ceremonially lit the lamp to pay homage to the visionary leaders and the tireless workforce who, over seven decades, transformed NLCIL into one of India's premier energy enterprises. The lamp-lighting underscored the spirit of 'Gratitude Day' — a



moment to pause, reflect, and express sincere appreciation for those who built this institution brick by brick, mine by mine.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Jagadish Chandra Majumdar took the audience on an inspiring journey through the various milestones and transformational stages of NLCIL's growth. He

underscored the pivotal role played by the employees and stakeholders in making NLCIL a prosperous and progressive organisation.

Shri Majumdar particularly highlighted the significance of the Talabira Project as NLCIL's first coal mining venture, emphasising its strategic importance in strengthening the company's future and contributing to

India's energy security. He lauded the employees for their tireless efforts, unwavering dedication, and the sacrifices they have made in driving the organisation forward.

He urged every member of the NLCIL family to sustain their strength, dedication, and commitment to the company's mission of "Creating Wealth for Wellbeing." Encouraging the

team to continue the successful journey with unity, resilience, and excellence, he reaffirmed the leadership's confidence in the collective potential of the workforce.

The 70th Raising Day celebration is a tribute to NLCIL's extraordinary journey of seven decades — 70 years of ensuring smiles in millions of families, 70 years of trust, teamwork, and transformation, and 70 years of energising the nation with sustainability. From its inception as a lignite mining company to its current stature as a multi-dimensional energy enterprise encompassing thermal power, solar energy, and now coal mining through the Talabira Project, NLCIL stands today as a beacon of national pride.

The celebration concluded with a spirit of renewed commitment, team solidarity, and sweet memories, reinforcing the collective resolve to march ahead towards greater milestones of nation-building and progress.

Puri District Begins Preparation for Clean and Accurate Voter list

Puri: The Puri district administration has initiated preparations for the Special Summary Revision (SSR) of the electoral roll, in accordance with the Election Commission of India's directive. The revision will consider July 1 as the qualifying date for voter eligibility this year, officials said.

A preparatory meeting on SSR was held at the Circuit House this afternoon, attended by representatives of various political parties. District Collector Divya Jyoti Parida, who presided over the meeting, emphasized that preparing a clean, accurate, and error-free voter list is the responsibility of all stakeholders.

Each polling booth has been assigned a Booth Level Officer (BLO) or booth-level official, with supervisors overseeing the process to ensure accountability. The Collector noted that political parties assigning agents to



every booth will further ensure a transparent and systematic voter registration process.

As per the schedule, preparation, training, and printing activities will take place from May 20 to 29. BLOs will conduct door-to-door verification from May 30 to June 28, followed by reorganization on June 28. The draft electoral roll will be displayed on July 5, and citizens can file objections or claims from July 5 to August 4. These objections will be heard and resolved by September 2, with the final voter list published on

September 6.

The district has 1,609 polling booths, with the same number of BLOs and 161 supervisors appointed for the SSR process. Additionally, six Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and 31 Assistant EROs (AEROs) will oversee the operations.

As of May 17, the district has 1,387,930 registered voters, comprising 713,030 men, 674,820 women, and 80 others. The 18-19 age group accounts for 24,520 voters (1.77%), while voters above 85 years number 16,736 (1.21%), and

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persons with disabilities total 17,677 (1.27%).

At the start of the meeting, Additional District Collector Shradha Chandra Behera welcomed participants and discussed voter data in detail. Other attendees included District Development Officer Sneha Arugula, ADC Revenue Dr. Sharad Chandra Mahapatra, ADC Protocol Nilamadhab Bhoi, Sub-Collector Raj Kishore Jena, Additional Sub-Collector Nilamadhab Majhi, Deputy Collector Runita Pradhan, Information & Public Relations Deputy Director Santosh Kumar Sethi, along with various district officials and political party representatives.

Counting of Jagannath Temple's Treasure Continues Amid Tight Security

Puri: The counting and verification of the jewelry treasure of Shri Jagannath Temple continued on Tuesday, marking the 12th day of the process under tight security arrangements. Earlier, the counting of the movable and external treasures had been completed. On Tuesday, high-level committee members and authorised officials oversaw the counting of precious ornaments stored in the inner treasury.

The process, which lasted 3 hours and 27 minutes, involved meticulous identification and counting of all jewelry based on the 1978 inventory list. In addition, photography, videography, and 3D mapping of the treasures were carried out. Temple chief administrator Dr. Arvind Padi provided details about the operation.

According to the administration, the large number of ornaments in the inner treasury has made the



counting process time-consuming. Each piece of jewelry is carefully wrapped in color-coded cloth or beads, placed in steel boxes, returned to the safe, and locked to ensure maximum security.

Officials said that the counting will continue for six more days this month and will also proceed smoothly before Snana Purnima in June. Dr. Padi stated that all items so far have been found in

proper condition, and the process is being conducted with full transparency and security.

Following the counting, all ornaments are photographed, videographed, and 3D-mapped, and a 2026 tag is being affixed to each piece. This record is expected to aid future counting exercises and maintain an accurate historical record of the temple's treasures.

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IOCL Approves SAF Joint Venture Project at Paradip

Paradip, 20/5,(DMS): - Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) received Board approval for the formation of a 50:50 joint venture with M11 Energy Transition Pvt. Ltd. to establish a 100 KTPA Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) project at Paradip, Odisha. The proposed joint venture company will be incorporated in India with equal ownership between Indian Oil Corporation and M11 Energy Transition Pvt.

Ltd. The project aims to strengthen India's clean energy and sustainable aviation fuel ecosystem as the country accelerates efforts to reduce carbon emissions in the aviation sector. However, the project remains subject to approvals from NITI Aayog, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), and other relevant regulatory authorities before commercial



implementation. The proposed SAF plant will utilize the Hydroprocessed Esters and Fatty Acids (HEFA) technology pathway, which is widely recognized for producing lower-carbon sustainable aviation fuel from renewable feedstocks. The facility will be located at Paradip, one of India's major industrial and refining hubs on the eastern coast. The strategic location is expected to support efficient integration with

existing refining and logistics infrastructure.

The estimated project cost for the Sustainable Aviation Fuel facility stands at approximately ₹1,063.60 crore, with a variance margin of ±30%. The variation reflects the project's preliminary planning stage as well as the requirement for further regulatory approvals and detailed project assessments. The proposed SAF project aligns with India's broader

sustainability and energy transition objectives, particularly in the aviation sector where demand for cleaner fuel alternatives is steadily increasing. As per the report, by investing in sustainable aviation fuel infrastructure, Indian Oil Corporation Limited aims to support the decarbonisation of air transport while strengthening the country's renewable and low-carbon fuel capabilities.

Medicine shops remained closed successfully in Nuapada district

NUAPADA/KHARIAR ROAD, 20/05 : Medicine stores across the Nuapada district and state were closed on May 20. The shutdown is part of a nationwide protest called by the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD) against the unregulated operations of e-pharmacies and corporate online medicine platforms.

All the medicine shops across the district were kept closed on Wednesday. Inderchand Jain, the Secretary of Nuapada Chemists and Druggists Association said that online companies are doing business by ignoring the rules, which needs to be curbed. Therefore, the All India Organization demands that e-pharmacy should be

completely banned and there should be a complete ban on online medicines..

They submitted a memorandum addressing to the Prime Minister through the collector Nuapada. Their key demands are to take strict action against illegal online sale of medicines, sale and delivery of medicines without valid and verified e-prescriptions should be prohibited, GSR 817(E) and GSR 220 (E) should be withdrawn immediately and predatory pricing policy by deep discounting practice by online platforms should be stopped.

Secretary NCDA Inderchand Jain, Pradeep Kumar Jain, Om Sharma and Manoj Pradhan were present at the time of submitting memorandum.

Scuffle Breaks Out Between Servitors at Jagannath Temple's Ratnabhandar

Puri: A minor scuffle erupted between two servitors at the Ratnabhandar (treasury) of the Jagannath Temple during the counting process. The incident was reported to the Chief Administrator of the temple. According to sources, a dispute arose among the servitors over entry to the Ratnabhandar. The situation was brought under control after intervention by the administrative authorities. Following the altercation, one of the servitors, Kishan, has been suspended by the Chief Administrator. The other involved servitor will remain suspended from service and participation in rituals until further notice. Officials confirmed that the confrontation occurred while the servitors were disputing entry procedures at the Ratnabhandar yesterday.

India pitches digital health revolution at World Health Assembly

New Delhi: Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda reiterated India's commitment to equitable healthcare, digital innovation, and international cooperation during the plenary session of the 79th World Health Assembly in Geneva.

The Assembly, themed "Reshaping Global Health: A Shared Responsibility", provided a global platform for India to showcase its transformative health initiatives. Speaking on behalf of the world's largest democracy, Nadda highlighted that India's progress towards Universal Health Coverage is anchored in a 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approach.

"We are accelerating access to quality and affordable healthcare for all," he declared, emphasising people-centric policies that leave no one behind. The

Minister informed the global gathering that India has operationalised over 1,85,000 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs across the country, delivering comprehensive primary healthcare services right at the community level. These centres play a vital role in preventive care, early diagnosis, and treatment of common ailments, significantly reducing the burden on higher-level facilities.

Nadda gave special emphasis to digital health transformation through the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. "This mission is strengthening India's national digital health ecosystem by creating over 880 million unique digital health identities, which facilitate longitudinal health records and ensure a seamless continuum of care," he noted.

This massive digital infrastructure enables better

coordination between providers, improves patient outcomes, and supports data-driven policymaking.

On the financial protection front, the world's largest public health assurance scheme, Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, continues to shield nearly 600 million vulnerable beneficiaries from catastrophic health expenses. The Minister also outlined India's robust pandemic preparedness measures and ongoing efforts to build resilient public health infrastructure capable of handling future challenges.

Addressing emerging technologies, Nadda spoke about India's recently launched Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare.

He stressed that "the future of Artificial Intelligence depends on our collective ability

to build ethical and human-centric systems", calling for responsible innovation that prioritises patient safety and equity. Reaffirming India's position as the 'Pharmacy of the World', the Minister recalled the country's pivotal role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the "Vaccine Maitri" initiative, India supplied nearly 300 million vaccine doses to around 100 countries, demonstrating its unwavering commitment to global health solidarity. Nadda urged the international community to convert shared responsibility into tangible impact. "In the spirit of solidarity, let this Assembly move forward to transform policy into action for a healthier future for all," he said.

India's proactive stance at the Assembly underscores its growing leadership in shaping a more inclusive and resilient global health architecture.

Officers must move against the tide for Viksit Bharat, says President Droupadi Murmu

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu today said that to achieve the goal of a 'Viksit Bharat' and take society to the pinnacle of progress, officers will often have to move forward by striving against the tide.

She said this after a group of IAS officers from the 2024 batch called on her at Rashtrapati Bhavan today. The President said the young officers will have the unique opportunity to work in diverse fields and head teams of experts in specialised areas. Ms Murmu said refraining from making a decision does not constitute morality. She emphasised that taking the right decisions in alignment with public interest and established order represents the true essence of morality.

Supreme Court Seeks Government Response on 30% Reservation for Women Lawyers in Government Panels

New Delhi: In a significant step toward addressing gender disparity in the legal profession, the Supreme Court of India on Wednesday sought responses from the Centre, state governments, and Union Territories regarding a petition that demands a 30 percent reservation for women advocates on government legal panels.

A three-judge bench, comprising Chief Justice

Surya Kant and Justices Jyotsna Singh and Vipul M Pancholi, issued notices after hearing arguments on a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by the Ladli Foundation Trust. Senior advocate and Supreme Court Bar Association president Vikas Singh presented the submissions on behalf of the petitioner.

A Push for Representation Across All Legal Tiers

The PIL seeks sweeping directives for the Central state administrations, and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to establish a minimum 30 percent representation for female lawyers.

Overcoming "Structural Barriers"

The petition highlights a stark contrast in the legal sector: while women are enrolling in law schools in record numbers, they

continue to face steep hurdles once they enter the workforce. According to the plea, deep-seated "structural barriers" remain a major roadblock to the professional advancement of female lawyers.

To counter these obstacles, the Ladli Foundation Trust filed the PIL under Article 32 of the Constitution, which permits citizens to seek the enforcement of fundamental

rights. The plea argues that a guaranteed 30 percent reservation is essential to secure and enforce key constitutional protections, specifically Article 14: Equality before law Article 15(3): Special provisions enabling the state to make positive discrimination for women Article 19(1)(g): The right to practice any profession Article 21: The protection of life and personal liberty.

MCL pacts Rs 1.26 Crore MoU with CIPET to skill youths

Sambalpur: Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), reinforcing its commitment to empowering communities, has signed a MoU with the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (CIPET), Bhubaneswar to provide two-year residential ITI training in Electrician and Fitter trades.

Under this programme, 40 students—20 each in Electrician and Fitter trades, selected from MCL's operational areas will be provided with industry-

relevant technical skills at CIPET, through a comprehensive 2-year ITI curriculum. This will create a sustainable livelihood opportunity and employability to the young minds. MCL, under its CSR initiative will fund ₹1.26 Crores to provide for all expenses related to training, food, accommodation, and associated costs for the 40 students for the two-year residential programme.

This marks the sixth batch of ITI training programme at CIPET,

Bhubaneswar under MCL's CSR initiative. Three batches (sessions 2021-23, 2022-24, and 2023-25) have already been successfully completed with more than 97 candidates employed. While, two batches for the sessions 2024-26, 2025-27 are currently going-on. This initiative reflects MCL's vision of fostering inclusive growth and contributing to sustainable socio-economic development in mining regions through structured skill development programmes.

All Medicine store on strike protesting online sale of Medicine

Jagatsinghpur, All 1046 Medicine store of Jagatsinghpur district were on strike To-day in protest of illegal on line sale of Medicine. As per Call given by All India Chemist & Druggist Association, Odisha, Chemist & Druggist Association, Jagatsinghpur district Chemist & Druggist Association went on strike. Association presented their demand before Prime Minister of India through Collector, Jagatsinghpur. Small. Chemist are facing a lot of problem due to illegal sale of on line Medicine, & Home delivery of Medicine and huge discount system. By this illegal procces the patients and Chemist are in threat. Association put forth four demand before Prime Minister.



They demand to ban illegal sale of on line sale of Medicine, ban of home delivery of Medicine without verification of e- prescription, withdrawal of Notification GSR 817 (E), of 2018 and GSR 220 (E) and to stop predatory pricing policy and deep discount system.

Though these demands presented several times but Govt. has not taken any action. So Chemist and Druggist started a token strike all over India. Association threatened to go for long strike if Govt. failed to give justice.

India's digital economy may contribute 20% to GDP by 2030: NCIIPC DG

New Delhi: Director General of the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC), Navin Kumar Singh, today said that India's digital economy is expected to contribute nearly 20 percent to the country's GDP by 2030.

He was addressing the inaugural session of the 7th edition of FICCI's CyberComm 2026 in New Delhi.

Mr Singh added that India has emerged as the world's leading country in digital payments and has developed an inclusive and democratic digital public infrastructure model. He highlighted that the country has moved from a cash-based informal economy to a high-productivity digital economy through initiatives such as UPI, optical fibre expansion, digital governance and paperless systems.

Supreme Court dismisses plea against caste enumeration in Census

New Delhi: The Supreme Court today dismissed a petition challenging the Centre's decision to undertake caste enumeration as part of the upcoming Census, saying the issue falls within the policy domain of the government.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant observed that the government needs to know the number of people belonging to backward classes to frame welfare measures for them. The bench said there was nothing wrong in collecting such data and declined to interfere in the matter.

CHSE Odisha +2 Results 2026 Declared

Bhubaneswar: The Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), Odisha, declared the Class 12 (Plus Two) results today, May 20, from its Samantapur office in Bhubaneswar.

Schools and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond released the results for Arts, Science, Commerce, and Vocational streams.

A total of 3,98,090 students appeared for the Plus Two exams, of which 3,41,781 cleared successfully. Sambalpur district topped the Arts stream with 89.48%, while Nabarangpur recorded the lowest at 77.14%. In Science, Balasore led with 96.63%, and Koraput had the lowest at 77.14%. Boudh achieved a perfect 100% pass rate in Commerce, while Balangir recorded 77.25%. In Vocational studies, Nabarangpur topped with 100%, and Malkangiri was lowest at 55.22%.

Students can download their digital marksheets from DigiLocker starting May 21, and collect hard copies from their institutions from June 15. Applications for instant and improvement exams will open in the first week of July, with official notification on May 27.

NEW STUDY PAVES WAY FOR SOLVING THE MYSTERIOUSLY HIGH TEMPERATURE OF SOLAR CORONA

A novel way to detect hidden turbulence in the Sun's outer atmosphere or corona could help scientists gain new insights into the long-standing mystery of why the corona is much hotter than the Sun's visible surface.

The Sun's outer atmosphere, the corona, is filled with magnetic structures that constantly sway as waves travel along them. Among the most common of these are propagating transverse magnetohydrodynamic (MHD) waves, often described as Alfvénic or kink waves. These waves make coronal structures oscillate sideways as they move outward along these magnetic structures.

Spectroscopically, such waves are known to produce alternating red and blue Doppler shifts, signatures of plasma moving toward and away from the observer due to transverse motions perpendicular to the magnetic field. However, whether these propagating transverse waves can also modify the shape of coronal spectral lines, producing measurable asymmetries in otherwise Gaussian profiles, has not yet been clearly established observationally.

Previous observations of the corona and transition region have revealed ubiquitous blueward asymmetries in spectral lines. These have largely been interpreted as signatures of upward flows, jets, or mass motions along magnetic field lines. In contrast, transverse waves are often considered nearly incompressible and therefore not expected to produce strong line profile asymmetries. As a result, their potential contribution to spectral asymmetries has received far less attention.

In a recent study by Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences, (ARIES) Nainital, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, advanced three-dimensional MHD simulations combined with forward modeling were used to investigate this question. The researchers Ms. Ambika Saxena, PhD student at ARIES and Prof. Vaibhav Pant from the Department of Physics, IIT, Delhi, performed simulations of an open-field coronal region containing density inhomogeneities across its transverse cross-section.

MCL pacts Rs 1.26 Crore MoU with CIPET to skill youths

Sambalpur, 20 May 2026: Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), reinforcing its commitment to empowering communities, has signed a MoU with the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (CIPET), Bhubaneswar to provide two-year residential ITI training in Electrician and Fitter trades. Under this programme, 40 students—20 each in Electrician and Fitter trades, selected from MCL's operational areas will be provided with

industry-relevant technical skills at CIPET, through a comprehensive 2-year ITI curriculum. This will create a sustainable livelihood opportunity and employability to the young minds. MCL, under its CSR initiative will fund ₹1.26 Crores to provide for all expenses related to training, food, accommodation, and associated costs for the 40 students for the two-year residential programme. This marks the sixth batch of ITI training programme at CIPET, Bhubaneswar under MCL's

CSR initiative. Three batches (sessions 2021-23, 2022-24, and 2023-25) have already been successfully completed with more than 97 candidates employed. While, two batches for the sessions 2024-26, 2025-27 are currently going-on. This initiative reflects MCL's vision of fostering inclusive growth and contributing to sustainable socio-economic development in mining regions through structured skill development programmes.

Dog Menace

THE Supreme Court's refusal to dilute its directions on removing stray dogs from public institutions is a necessary intervention in a worsening public safety crisis. For years, civic authorities across India have failed to address the alarming rise in dog-bite incidents, forcing courts to step into what is essentially an administrative vacuum. As per the National Centre for Disease Control, India recorded over 30 lakh dog-bite cases in 2023, followed by more than 37 lakh cases in 2024 — averaging over 10,000 incidents every day. Several states and cities are witnessing an unprecedented surge. Kerala recently reported more than 3.6 lakh dog-bite cases within a year, while Noida identified dozens of dog-bite hotspots after tens of thousands of complaints in just a few months. Behind these statistics are children attacked near schools, elderly citizens unable to walk safely and residents living in fear of aggressive stray packs.

At the same time, the crisis reflects a deeper failure in how society and institutions treat animals. A couple of days ago, a shocking incident emerged from Chandigarh, where a puppy was reportedly thrown into a tandoor by an unidentified person. Such acts expose the disturbing cruelty that often exists beneath public debate. Equally troubling is the condition of many dog pounds and shelters. Reports from Chandigarh have highlighted deplorable conditions, including instances of dogs allegedly eating their own young due to neglect.

The SC has rightly held that humane treatment of animals cannot mean ignoring human safety, but neither can public safety become a justification for neglecting animal welfare. The SC's emphasis on lawful relocation must now be matched by investments in shelters, sterilisation centres, vaccination drives and veterinary facilities. The challenge is to build a humane, accountable and effective stray management system that protects both citizens and canines.

Police Encounter

UTTAR Pradesh has witnessed, on average, five encounters every day under Yogi Adityanath's rule over the past nine years. According to the state government, the encounters have led to the killing of 289 "hardened criminals", while around 12,000 have been injured. These striking figures have reignited the debate about trigger-happy cops and the limits of state power. The BJP dispensation portrays these encounters as evidence of a "zero-tolerance" policy



against criminal elements. As per the National Crime Records Bureau's latest report, UP's crime rate is 180.2 per one lakh population — far lower than the national average of 252.3. The relentless crackdown has apparently weakened organised crime networks, but the means employed to achieve this goal have come under scrutiny.

There is no denying that public safety is a vital responsibility of the state. Citizens expect swift action against extortionists, gangsters and other hardcore offenders. Cops are authorised to use force in self-defence, but the celebration of encounters as a governance model raises serious constitutional concerns. The Allahabad High Court's remarks about the growing trend of accused persons being shot in the legs suggest a troubling normalisation of extra-judicial methods. The HC rightly reminded the state in January this year that punishment was the exclusive domain of courts, not the police. In a democracy governed by the rule of law, even the most dreaded criminal possesses constitutional rights.

The Supreme Court's 2014 guidelines were framed precisely to curb fake encounters and misuse of police power. Mandatory FIRs, independent investigations, magisterial inquiries and transparent documentation are important safeguards to ensure justice. The danger lies in the glorification of encounter policing. Due process is undermined when "instant justice" becomes politically rewarding. Uttar Pradesh's challenge is not only to reduce crime, but also to do so within the bounds of the law.

Oil Crisis: India's Economic Challenge

Tejeswar Patnaik

India's oil crisis, the growing current account deficit, and the persistent depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar have triggered intense debate among political parties, economists, media persons, and the general public following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent call for adherence to austerity measures.

At the heart of the crisis lies the continuing West Asia conflict and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Navy, which has severely disrupted commercial movement. Since the beginning of the US-Israel-Iran conflict in late February this year, the Strait has remained largely blocked, creating serious concerns for global energy security. Iran has maintained that unless the US naval blockade of its ports is lifted, the Strait will remain closed. In response, the United States has deployed additional naval forces to the region and tightened restrictions on Iranian ports.

During US President Trump's recent visit to China, there was no indication of any diplomatic breakthrough regarding the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. With no immediate resolution in sight, oil supply through this critical maritime route remains badly affected, triggering oil shocks across many countries of the Asian continent.

For India, the situation is particularly serious because nearly 80% of its crude oil and gas imports transit through the Strait of Hormuz, making it strategically vital for India's energy security. India now imports crude oil from around 40 countries. As a result of this diversification, India now imports crude from around 40 countries. As a result of this diversification,

Now 70 per cent of total imports come from outside the route of the Strait of Hormuz, which involves longer time, higher transportation and insurance costs when compared to supplies from the Gulf region. The Govt has also directed the oil companies to operate their oil refineries at maximum capacity utilisation.

The opposition has criticised the Prime Minister's seven-point austerity



India's oil import bill is rising steadily as global crude prices have surpassed \$110 per barrel, with some forecasts suggesting a possible increase toward \$120–127 if the crisis persists. A prolonged Middle East conflict could significantly worsen inflation, trigger price hikes, reduce employment opportunities, and further weaken the rupee. Recent estimates indicate Brent crude around \$110–115 per barrel in May 2026, with peak projections near \$115 rather than a stable \$127 currently.

appeal, questioning why such a call was made barely a week after the election results were declared. They argue that the Union Government failed to assess the seriousness of the West Asia crisis, while several other countries could have taken remedial measures much earlier during the US-Iran conflict.

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Modi's appeal for austerity measures includes postponing gold purchases for at least one year, avoiding foreign travel and destination weddings, encouraging employees to work from home, reducing fertiliser consumption by 50% and

focusing on organic farming, cutting edible oil consumption, using public transport and electric vehicles for local travel, and promoting Swadeshi products. His larger objective is to conserve India's foreign exchange reserves and reduce unnecessary imports.

Since the Hormuz crisis remains unresolved and unpredictable, India is facing major supply-demand pressures in crude oil and gas. The likely outcome is an increase in petrol, diesel, and other fuel prices. Fuel prices have recently been raised by around Rs 3 per litre, roughly 3%, which remains comparatively lower than in many other countries.

However, critics argue that when global crude prices had sharply declined in previous years due to oversupply, the Union Government did not adequately reduce domestic fuel prices. As a result, the base price remained high, and consumers were denied the benefit of lower international crude prices. Global energy tracking suggests that nearly 85 out of around 150 countries have increased petrol prices

to manage rising import costs and supply disruptions. Among the sharpest retail fuel price hikes globally, Cambodia has reportedly recorded nearly 68%, followed by Vietnam at around 50%, Nigeria at 35%, and Malaysia at nearly 30%.

India, like many major economies, maintains a Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) to deal with emergencies such as war, global supply disruptions, and sudden oil price shocks. This reserve is different from the normal commercial stocks maintained by our oil companies. India's current SPR capacity stands at 5.33 million metric tonnes, and the actual stock is around 64% of total capacity. In addition, the existing commercial stocks maintained by Oil companies may last for two months for consumption. The government controls the SPR and uses it only during emergent situations. India is also expanding energy infrastructure under Phase II, including the proposed strategic reserve facility at Chandikhole in Odisha, developed in cooperation with the UAE. During the Prime Minister's recent visit to the UAE, an agreement was reached between the UAE and India to this effect.

India's strategic reserves remain small compared to China, which has one of the world's largest petroleum reserve systems.

With the deepening West Asia crisis, India's GDP growth may come down to around 6.4–6.7% in FY 2026–27 because of rising import bills and sustained high crude prices. The oil shock affects far more than the energy sector. The rupee has weakened further against the US dollar as oil prices rise and importers rush to hedge risks.

The increasing economic strain triggers inflationary pressure, reduces consumer spending, and weakens overall financial stability. As India confronts these growing challenges, policymakers must take strategic and suitable decisions to protect both energy security and our growing economy.

Realize that you could expand little more

Kabir Kumar Jena

A gentleman quit his job as he wanted to start his own business. When he told his family that he has decided to quit his job, his father opposed him. When asked why, he simply said what is the guarantee that his business would be a success. He said there is no guarantee that it would succeed but there is no guarantee it would fail too. It is equal probability. But what if you fail? What if I succeed? He did not want to think of any negative consequences. Finally he said a very big thing, that whatever happens would be my sole responsibility. Father asked him to leave the house and to come back only if he is successful. He had to go through lots of struggle, he slept in gurudwaras too and ate in community lunch. However, he did not give up. He only had one thought of establishing business. Finally God obliged him with success after 7 years of painful period. He came back home after 8 years and asked his father that he wants to renovate their house as he wants his family to live in abundance now. He did not have any hard feelings for anyone, infact he said that if his father would not have kicked him out, he would have never reached to this level. His father hugged him and apologized but there were no hard feelings. Every thing negative had washed away in the joy of being successful.

There is no right or wrong in this world. Everyone has own right and wrong. Your right might be my wrong. It is an individual's choice to choose his life path. You may choose a middle road always as it would be a safe road. Like the person above thought his son should not quit his job because it is safe and would get an assurance of salary, he is right in his way. However, the son decided to walk on the edges and lived the extreme pain before reaching to the state of extreme joy. A person who walks on edges would always have the thrill of walking on the edges. He increases his platform size depending on how far is the edge. If someone is walking on the extreme edge, agree he would have that much pain as his platform is that big but he would have equal joy too.

However, the main point is, you should choose your limits as per yourself. If you think you can do it, choose the extreme point, if you think you can't then you can choose the smaller one. But without trying how would you know what is your limit because every time you would realize that you could expand little more.

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Faith, God and Sadhana

Utkalananda Ajaya Kumar Behera

Unlike commonly conceived, faith and reason are not opposed to each other. To see them as opposites is to be cut off from both, but to see them as complementary is to join the halves to make a whole. In common parlance words are very loosely used — therefore most often misused. Words as "Sabda" must touch in their true context and capacity, our awareness of a whole related world. Therefore Sabdas most often run into each other for a meaningful expression. There is a wonderful word in the Sanskrit language that includes all that faith stands for and more. This is "Shraddha". So also reason is creative enquiry is "Jijnasa" the tireless effort to discover the truth. Shraddha or faith is the attitude of Let me experience how it is so. Faith is not a static of belief (visvas) which hangs on the wall as maxim, it is a constant effort at experiencing Truth.

The Upanishads tell us about the lovely lives of the Gurus and Sishyas of this ancient land. In Chhandogya Upanishad is mentioned a very fascinating story about Svetaketu and his great father Aruni. At the end of a memorable dialogue between the father and son, the father asks the young boy to have faith in the words of the Guru : "Shraddhasva soumya", My boy, have Shraddha". This is a great piece of advice. Faith or Shraddha converts belief into conviction and conviction into realisation of truth. It is an active effort at experiencing belief; and the process is reason or jijnasa. Jijnasa. Jijnasa is not curiosity. It is an active and constant travelling towards the very centre.

Reason accomodates doubt. Faith is the power to solve it. Reason lays the track, faith helps one to tread it. Reason cannot reach experience. Faith can. Reason activates faith. Faith gives reason the capacity or relentless enquiry and application. Faith awakens intuition by fulfilling reason. Reason gives cynicism by overruling faith. Reason seeks consistency, faith, truth. Reason sees parts. Faith sees Whole. Reason proves the whole through the parts, faith justifies the parts through the whole. Faith understands reason explains. Faith loves, reason it. Faith is an uncut diamond, reason shapes it, manifests its inherent beauty and brilliance. Belief may turn out to be superstition. Faith never reason may fight with belief - Visvas, not with faith, shraddha, Jijnasa devoid of shraddha shall inspire no Tapas. Shraddha devoid of Jijnasa no 'Svadhyaaya'. Faith and reason, Shradha and Jijnasa are the two breaths that a Sadhaka lives by.

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The presence of stray dogs has long been a familiar part of life across Indian cities and villages

However, in recent years, increasing incidents of dog attacks, rabies infections and public safety concerns have turned the issue into a serious social and administrative challenge. Against this backdrop, the recent observations of the Supreme Court of India regarding the removal of stray dogs from public spaces have reignited a nationwide debate.

This issue cannot be viewed merely through the lens of "dog lovers versus dog haters." It is a far more complex question involving urban governance, public health, civic responsibility, animal welfare and human compassion.

India continues to account for one of the highest numbers of rabies-related deaths in the world. Every year, thousands of people suffer dog bites, with children, elderly citizens and pedestrians being particularly vulnerable. In many areas, packs of stray dogs chasing, surrounding or attacking people during early mornings and evenings have become increasingly common. Around hospitals, schools, bus stands and market areas, the problem is often more severe.

In such circumstances, it is natural for ordinary citizens to ask difficult but legitimate questions: Shouldn't human life and public safety remain the highest priority? Should public spaces not be free from fear? The judiciary, too, has indicated that the safety and health of citizens cannot be ignored.

At the same time, there is another side to the debate that cannot be dismissed. Animal welfare activists argue that the root cause of the stray dog problem lies largely in human negligence and poor urban management. Unregulated garbage disposal, open waste bins, food leftovers dumped in public areas, the absence of effective sterilisation programmes and years of administrative inaction have all contributed to the unchecked growth of stray dog populations.

According to animal rights groups, removing or mistreating stray dogs is neither humane nor a sustainable solution. Instead, they advocate scientific and long-term measures such as Animal Birth

Control (ABC) programmes, large-scale anti-rabies vaccination drives and the establishment of proper animal shelters. Many countries across the world have successfully reduced stray animal populations and rabies risks through such systematic approaches.

Public opinion on the matter remains sharply divided. One section believes that when children and vulnerable citizens no longer feel safe on the streets, stricter measures become necessary. Another section argues that society cannot escape its own responsibility by blaming helpless animals for a crisis created by human failure. Social media discussions reflect this growing divide — some prioritise safety, while others emphasise compassion.

In reality, both sides raise valid concerns. Public safety must come first, but that does not justify cruelty towards animals. The true mark of a civilised society lies in how responsibly it treats both humans and animals. What India needs, therefore, is not emotional confrontation but a balanced and practical policy framework.

Neither judicial observations alone nor emotionally driven campaigns can solve the issue permanently.

Local administrations must adopt a scientific, humane and accountable approach. Regular ABC programmes, universal rabies vaccination, improved waste management systems, dedicated animal shelters and sustained public awareness campaigns are essential. Simultaneously, authorities must ensure that public spaces remain safe and accessible for citizens.

Ultimately, the stray dog issue is not merely an animal problem; it is a reflection of India's urban planning failures, civic discipline and social responsibility. Fear and compassion need not stand in opposition. A balanced approach rooted in science, empathy and effective governance offers the only meaningful path forward.

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Piyush Goyal Slams Rahul Gandhi Over Remark On PM Modi's Italy Visit

New Delhi, 20/5: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday after the latter criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Italy in a snide social media post on X. "Why does Rahul Gandhi hate India and everything made in India so much?" Piyush Goyal quipped. "India has today become the world's Trusted Destination through 'Made in India' and 'Local Goes Global', but the Congress sees a problem in every Indian achievement," the Union Minister said. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is now earning the global respect, investment, and trust that the country has been waiting for decades and that is what Rahul Gandhi cannot tolerate," he added. Rahul Gandhi had said on X that the Prime Minister is in Italy, distributing sweets, while the country is passing through an



economic storm. Prime Minister Modi gifted a packet of Parle's 'Melody' toffees to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during their meeting in Rome. The Italian Prime Minister shared a video on social media of PM Modi gifting her a packet of toffee. 'Melodi' or 'Melody' is an internet nickname coined by social media users for the friendly public chemistry

between Prime Minister Modi and his Italian counterpart Meloni. The term combines parts of their surnames — Meloni + Modi = Melodi. It became a viral meme after the two leaders were seen warmly interacting at global events such as the G20 Summit and the COP28 in Dubai. The phrase went viral online after Meloni posted a selfie video with

PM Modi at COP28, captioned: "Good friends at COP28. #Melodi." PM Modi is currently in Italy as part of the final leg of his five-nation tour to Europe. 'Melodi' has now come to reflect the improving ties between India and Italy in areas such as trade, defence and strategic cooperation in the changing geopolitical landscape that has seen India and the European country come closer. After arriving in Rome on Tuesday, PM Modi met Meloni over dinner, followed by a visit to the iconic Colosseum. The two leaders exchanged perspectives on a wide range of subjects. A bilateral meeting between the two leaders is scheduled for Wednesday. Earlier, Meloni shared an old picture of both the leaders at the Colosseum to welcome PM Modi on his arrival in Italy. Sharing a picture with PM Modi on X, Meloni wrote, "Welcome to Rome, my friend!"

PM Modi Gifting Melody Toffees To Meloni Breaks Internet, Video Crosses Past 100 Million Views

New Delhi, 20/5: The video of Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifting a pack of Melody toffee to Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni on Wednesday morning first took social media by storm and has now created a record of sorts in terms of views and public engagement. As per the latest social media metrics, the video of the duo sharing a lighter moment has crossed 100 million views within a few hours of the 'melody toffee' moment, when PM Modi handed over a pack of popular chocolates to the Italian PM. PM Modi gifting 'very very good toffee' to Giorgia Meloni broke the internet as the netizens went gaga over it and couldn't stop talking about it. As the video circulated online, it went viral, evoking global interest and dominating social media trends. In fact, names like 'Parle', 'Melody'



became the most searched terms on Google and X. Interestingly, the melody moment also drove up the share price of Parle Industries, with its stock price hitting the upper

circuit, though it has no connection with the company that makes Melody chocolates. It's the Parle Products, an unlisted company that manufactures confectionery and chocolates besides biscuits and poppins. PM Modi's humorous exchange with Italian PM came ahead of the high-level diplomatic engagement between the two nations. The informal exchange, marked by laughter between the two leaders, was also shared by the Italian PM on Instagram, where she also spoke about the gesture and the gift received from the Indian Prime Minister. Sharing the video of the moment, Meloni said, "Prime Minister Modi brought us a gift — a very, very good toffee — Melody," as both leaders were seen sharing a laugh during the interaction. "Thank you for the gift," she further wrote in the caption.

Delhi HC Dismisses Plea To De-Register AAP; Disqualify Kejriwal, Sisodia From Elections

New Delhi, 20/5: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday dismissed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking de-registration of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and disqualification of its leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, and Durgesh Pathak from contesting elections over their refusal to participate in proceedings before Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma in the excise policy case. A Division Bench of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia termed the plea, filed by Satish Kumar Aggarwal, "highly misconceived" and refused to entertain the petition. "Having heard the parties, we are of the view that the PIL is highly misconceived," the Delhi High Court observed, rejecting the contention that observations made by Justice Sharma against AAP leaders in a separate proceeding could justify the de-registration

of the political party. During the hearing, the CJ Upadhyaya-led Bench repeatedly questioned the maintainability of the plea and asked the petitioner to highlight any statutory provision empowering the Election Commission of India (ECI) to de-register a political party in such circumstances. "You are asking us to direct ECI to deregister a party. Is there any provision for the de-registration of a political party?" the Delhi High Court asked. The petitioner, relying on a Supreme Court judgment, contended that a political party can be de-registered in three situations, including where no inquiry is required by the ECI, such as when a party is declared unlawful under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). At this, the bench said: "It is not the case that the party has obtained registration by fraud or that it has amended its rules in

violation of Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, nor is it a case where the party has intimated that it has ceased to have faith in the Constitution." "The third ground is that a party can be deregistered if it is declared unlawful under the UAPA or a similar law. Has this political party been declared unlawful?" it questioned. As the petitioner's counsel replied in the negative and argued that the basis of the plea was Justice Sharma's observations against AAP leaders in contempt proceedings, the bench responded: "If someone is found to have scandalised the court, the remedy lies under the Contempt of Courts Act. Even if convicted, where is the provision that bars such a person from contesting elections?" The petitioner eventually conceded that no specific legal provision exists to support the relief sought.

MP Sasmit Patra Urges FM Sitharaman To Bring Petrol And Diesel Under GST

New Delhi, 20/5: Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday and submitted a detailed representation urging the initiation of structured national deliberations on the inclusion of petrol and diesel under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) framework. In his representation, Patra emphasised that the constitutional framework under Article 279A(5) already envisages the eventual inclusion of petroleum products within GST through the recommendation of the GST Council. He noted that while the matter had previously been deliberated upon in the GST Council following directions of the Kerala High Court, prevailing economic conditions now warrant a fresh, pragmatic and consultative reconsideration of the issue. The BJD MP highlighted that fuel prices



directly impact inflation, transportation and logistics costs, agricultural input costs, MSME operating expenditure and household consumption patterns across the country. He underlined that interstate disparities in VAT structures continue to dilute the objective of tax harmonisation and market integration envisioned

under GST. Drawing attention to Odisha's economic profile as a major mining, industrial and logistics-intensive State, Patra observed that calibrated GST inclusion of petrol and diesel could significantly reduce freight and supply-chain costs, improve industrial competitiveness and provide substantial economic

relief to ordinary citizens, farmers, transport operators and MSMEs. At the same time, he acknowledged the legitimate concerns of States regarding revenue stability arising from petroleum taxation and therefore advocated a balanced and phased framework rather than immediate unconditional inclusion. He proposed that the GST Council may consider a calibrated GST slab structure, transitional compensation support for States, a limited revenue-protection cess mechanism and a formula-based fiscal stabilisation framework during the transition period. Patra further requested the Finance Minister to facilitate broad-based consultations with all States and consider constituting a technical and fiscal working group to examine implementation models and build national consensus on phased integration of petroleum products within the GST architecture.

Repeated Anticipatory Bail Pleas Reduce Legal Process To 'Mere Gamble': Supreme Court

New Delhi, 20/5: The Supreme Court has set aside an order of the Madras High Court granting anticipatory bail to a man and his wife, accused of cheating his 75-year-old mother in a multi-crore property transaction case, observing that repeated bail pleas filed in quick succession reduce the legal process to a 'mere gamble' and amount to abuse of process. A bench of Justices Sanjay Kumar and K. Vinod Chandran allowed an appeal filed by the complainant Vasantha, challenging the Madras High Court order granting anticipatory bail to her son Karthikeyan Manikandan and daughter-in-law Vasupradha. Describing the dispute as a "sordid saga of a mother accusing her son and daughter-in-law of cheating her", the apex court found that the allegations disclosed serious

financial irregularities and exploitation of a senior citizen. According to the FIR registered at Trichy City Police Station in May 2025 under Sections 406 and 420 of the IPC and Section 24 of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, the complainant alleged that the accused induced her to transfer family properties and subsequently misappropriated the proceeds from the sale of land. The complainant stated that she was made to believe that around 11.33 acres of land had been sold at Rs 85 lakh per acre and that approximately Rs 9.65 crore was credited into a bank account opened in her name. However, she alleged that the amount was withdrawn by the accused persons. She further alleged that she later discovered the land had actually been sold at Rs 2.75 crore

per acre and that nearly Rs 22 crore had allegedly been paid separately to the accused. The FIR also alleged that she was made to transfer her house to her son on the promise of being maintained, but was eventually driven out and rendered homeless. The anticipatory bail pleas filed by the accused before the Sessions Court in Tiruchirappalli were rejected in July 2025. Their subsequent plea before the Madras High Court was also dismissed on August 4, 2025, with the High Court observing that custodial interrogation was necessary as the investigation was at a preliminary stage. However, within a month, the accused filed a fresh anticipatory bail plea before another Bench of the High Court and secured relief on September 15, 2025. Taking exception to this

approach, the apex court observed that the Madras High Court failed to even note that an earlier bail plea had been rejected by another Bench just weeks earlier. "The learned Judge did not note the fact that another Bench had, on 04.08.2025, dismissed the bail petition moved by the accused and, therefore, did not even go into the issue as to whether there was any changed circumstance warranting a different view being taken," the Supreme Court said. The Justice Sanjay Kumar-led Bench added: "Filing of anticipatory bail petitions in quick succession in this manner, viz., three petitions in three months, reduces that legal process, which is intended to pre-emptively secure the personal liberty of an individual in deserving cases, to a mere gamble and is nothing short of an abuse of process."

Jamiat Chief Arshad Madani Wants Cow To Be Declared 'National Animal', Says It Will End Hate Politics

New Delhi, 20/5: It would be a matter of delight if the cow is declared a "national animal", said Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind president Maulana Syed Arshad Madani on Wednesday, while holding the polarising politics around the sacred animal as the "root cause" behind incidents of hate-filled rants and attacks against the minority community. Venting his concern over the 'politics of hatred' and rising incidents of lynching against Muslims, apparently at the hands of cow vigilantes, Madani said the declaration of the sacred cow as the "national animal" will bring a lasting solution to the problem. Taking to his social media handle on X, the Jamiat chief also wondered over what was preventing the government from bringing a resolution to this effect. He said that the majority community doesn't merely consider the cow as sacred



but also considers it as their mother and demanded, "mob lynchings in the name of the cow, the killing of innocent people, hate politics, and this game of defaming Muslims must now come to an end." He said that no human life should be lost due to politics in the name of religion and pressed for bringing a permanent resolution to the politics of communal divide and hatred. Madani also sought to draw attention to different yardsticks in different states on beef and alleged that those with significant Muslim population see repeated instances

of attacks on the minorities, while there are many other places where beef is sold openly. "This is not devotion but a double standard and political manoeuvring," he stated. Madani, also the Vice President of All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), further went on to question the 'double standards' of certain BJP leaders and ministers, who have purportedly admitted on camera about consuming beef and claimed that those behind the mob violence in the name of cow protection remain silent on the issue. He suggested that the cow be given the status of "national animal", reasoning that this would bring an end to the problems for once and all. "Whatever law is enacted for this purpose should be applied uniformly across all states of the country without any discrimination," he further demanded in his long post on X.

Bharat Tex 2026 App To Boost AI-Driven Networking, Business Matchmaking: Govt

New Delhi, 20/5: The government launched the Bharat Tex 2026 Event App on Wednesday to boost AI-driven networking and business matchmaking at India's flagship global textile event, according to an official statement. The digital platform that was launched by Neelam Shami Rao, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, is designed to enhance the experience of buyers, international delegates, speakers, sourcing consultants, partners, exhibitors and visitors, while supporting the scale and ambition of Bharat Tex 2026. Developed as a comprehensive digital

companion, the platform enables participants to access event information, discover exhibitors, schedule meetings, navigate the venue, capture leads, access knowledge sessions and receive real-time updates through a single interface, according to the government. It further said that a major highlight of the app is its AI smart assistant, offering a 24x7 conversational guide for attendees. Moreover, users can ask event-related queries in simple language and receive instant information on schedules, venue details, directions and other key aspects, supporting both domestic and international participants.

The app also enables structured networking and business engagement through dedicated meeting modules, allowing users to discover relevant partners, schedule meetings, manage availability, receive requests and track interactions. In addition, its QR-based lead capture system further allows exhibitors and participants to scan digital badges and save contact details for follow-up. Additional features include exhibitor discovery tools with structured search and filtering, advanced navigation support across Bharat Mandapam with floor plans and booth location

services, and access to live event agendas and knowledge sessions. Organised by the Bharat Tex Trade Federation in collaboration with 11 textile export promotion councils and industry bodies, and supported by the Ministry of Textiles, Bharat Tex 2026 is inspired by the Prime Minister's 5F vision — Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign — aiming to position India as a global textile sourcing and investment hub. The government stated that the event will be held between July 14 and July 17 in the national capital and is expected to draw over 7,000

international buyers and more than 1,30,000 trade visitors, showcasing India's full textile value chain.



Italian PM Meloni Bats For Strengthening Connectivity Via IMEC

Rome,20/5: Highlighting the strategic geographic positioning of Italy and India across the Mediterranean and the Indo-Pacific respectively, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on Wednesday underscored the importance of deepening connectivity, especially through major initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), which was launched during the G20 Summit in New Delhi in September 2023. Addressing a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Meloni said, "We are two peninsulas, two platforms... I will just say platforms, which are projected in crucial areas of the world, the Mediterranean and the Indo-Pacific area. We think that strengthening the interconnection between these two important areas is of extreme importance. That's the reason why we wanted to further develop IMEC, which is the infrastructure corridor, an economic corridor between Europe, the Middle East, and India, which was established during the G20 summit," said Meloni. "It is an initiative we strongly believe in because we think that it can unleash a potential, a wonderful potential for our trade, for our businesses and for our relations. Italy and India share a joint vision on many



of the huge challenges of our times – international stability, protecting rules, economic security, the resilience of the value chains, the promotion of peace, and inclusive development," she added. She further said that discussions between the two leaders covered key global security challenges, including the crisis in Ukraine and Iran, reflecting a shared understanding for the need of sustained negotiations to advance peace and stability in conflict-affected regions. "And we discussed many of the complex scenarios we are faced with. We talked about Ukraine;

we talked about our commitment to achieve a lasting and fair peace. As to the Iranian crisis, we exchanged our views with a joint hope that the peace negotiations will continue and reach a positive conclusion in a framework which we know is very critical and very shaky. In both scenarios, we are increasingly interconnected, and Italy will continue to play the role," Meloni noted. Emphasising that Italy and India will continue to play their roles together to contribute to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific, she underlined the significance of ensuring freedom of navigation, noting that both nations share the common vision

of a free, inclusive, and open Indo-Pacific. Both leaders on Wednesday also agreed to elevate India-Italy ties to a special strategic partnership during their bilateral meeting in Rome. "The two leaders reviewed progress in implementation of the Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-29 and agreed to further deepen and enrich bilateral cooperation, especially in areas including trade, investments, technology, defence, the blue economy, connectivity, education and people-to-people ties, among others. They discussed geopolitical developments and agreed to work on global issues of shared interest," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated.

Looking Forward To Celebrate America's 250th Birthday With Partners In India: Rubio

New Delhi,20/5: US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio on Wednesday said that he is looking forward to celebrating America's 250th birthday with partners in India. In a video message shared ahead of his visit to India, Rubio said, "As America gets ready to celebrate our 250th birthday, we look forward to doing it with our partners in India. India is the world's largest democracy and we are world's oldest. So, we look forward to celebrating it together." While sharing the video on social media platform X, the US Embassy in India stated, "We're looking forward to celebrating with you, Mr. Secretary!" The US will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4. Rubio is scheduled to travel to India from May 23-26, visiting Kolkata, Agra, Jaipur and New Delhi, as Washington and New Delhi prepare for talks expected to focus on the Quad partnership, energy security, trade and defence cooperation amid rising geopolitical tensions in the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East. The State



Department announced Rubio's travel plans on Tuesday, saying he would first travel to Helsingborg, Sweden, on May 22 to attend the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting before heading to India. "The Secretary will discuss energy security, trade, and defence cooperation during meetings with senior Indian officials," State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott said in a statement. Apart from bilateral meetings with Indian leaders in New Delhi, Rubio is also expected to attend the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting involving India, the United States, Japan and Australia. Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald

Trump held a telephonic conversation during which they discussed the current situation in West Asia, as well as ways to further strengthen the bilateral partnership. "Received a call from my friend President Donald Trump. We reviewed the substantial progress achieved in our bilateral cooperation in various sectors. We are committed to further strengthening our Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership in all areas," PM Modi posted on X after the phone call on April 14. "We also discussed the situation in West Asia and stressed the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure," he wrote further.

Iran Losing Friends Due To Maximalist Posturing: Report

New Delhi,20/5: While diplomacy could have reduced tensions in the Persian Gulf, Iran has chosen the path of "maximalist posturing" to choke the Gulf of Hormuz, resulting in the disruption of supply chains which have caused fuel, fertiliser and food prices to soar, leading to immense economic hardship in the developing countries, according to an article in International Business Times. During ceasefire discussions with the United States and other mediators, Iran reportedly attached multiple conditions that made meaningful progress nearly impossible. "Instead of using diplomacy to calm already volatile markets, Tehran doubled down on confrontation. Even during recent discussions within the BRICS framework, where many developing nations were hoping for stability and economic cooperation, Iran continued projecting defiance rather than flexibility," states the article authored by Shujaat Ali Quadri. It also highlights that Iran is making a strategic miscalculation with its extreme posturing to hold the world economy to ransom. By continuously projecting



unpredictability, Iran risks alienating even those countries that traditionally avoided taking sides against it. "Nations in Asia and the Global South want stable energy supplies, not ideological standoffs in shipping lanes. They may sympathise with Iran's grievances, but they cannot support actions that directly damage their own economies. A nation has every right to defend its sovereignty. But there is a difference between defending national interests and holding the world economy hostage," the article observes. The irony is that many developing countries that maintained balanced relations with Iran are now being punished by Tehran's

brinkmanship. Iran's repeated hints about imposing tolls on vessels crossing the Strait of Hormuz are especially alarming. International maritime law does not permit any single country to arbitrarily weaponise one of the world's most critical trade corridors. Iran's defenders often argue that Western sanctions and military pressure pushed Tehran into a corner. The answer to economic isolation cannot be economic blackmail, the article points out. What is equally troubling is the mixed messaging from Iran itself. On one hand, Iranian officials speak of regional stability and cooperation. On the other, state-linked rhetoric repeatedly invokes the possibility of disruption in Hormuz whenever tensions escalate.

India And Italy Have Elevated Ties To Special Strategic Partnership, PM Modi Announces In Rome

Rome,20/5: Announcing the elevation of India-Italy ties to a 'Special Strategic Partnership', Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029 provides a practical and forward-looking framework for enhancing bilateral ties. Addressing a joint press meet with his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni following their talks in Rome on Wednesday, PM Modi stated that the bilateral trade between India and Italy is progressing towards the target of 20 billion Euros with more than 800 Italian companies actively contributing to India's growth story. "I am happy to announce that we are upgrading our relations to a Special Strategic Partnership. In today's meeting, we discussed in detail ways to further strengthen our partnership. The India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029 provides our partnership with a practical and forward-looking framework. We are moving forward on this in a time-bound manner," he said. He also expressed his gratitude to



Italian PM for the warm welcome. "Rome is known as the 'Eternal City' in the world. My Lok Sabha constituency in India, Kashi, is also known as Eternal city in India. When two civilisations meet, then discussions are not limited to an agenda, but the depth of history, a glimpse of the future and the simplicity of friendship can be seen in it." PM Modi noted that the ties between India and Italy have gained new momentum, direction and confidence under the leadership of PM Giorgia Meloni. "In the last 3.5 years, I got an opportunity to meet PM

Meloni many times. This shows close cooperation and coordination between India and Italy. Under her leadership, our relations have gained new momentum, new direction, and new confidence," PM Modi said. He stated that the close cooperation between India and Italy in defence and security showcases "deep mutual trust" between two nations. Cooperation is also increasing between the defence industries of India and Italy. "Our Defence Industrial Roadmap has paved the way for co-development and co-production. As maritime powers, close cooperation in the field of

connectivity between India and Italy is natural. We will work together on shipping, ports modernisation, logistics and blue economy." PM Modi said that the shared initiative of India and Italy against terror financing has presented an important example before the world. "India and Italy agree that terrorism is a serious challenge to humanity. Our shared initiative against terror financing has presented an important example before the entire world. India and Italy have given this clear message that responsible democracies do not merely condemn terrorism, but also take concrete steps to dismantle its financial networks." He announced that two nations will move forward on the principle of design and develop in India and Italy and deliver for the world. "Italy is renowned worldwide for design and precision. India's identity is that of a powerhouse of scale, talent, and affordable innovation. Therefore, we will move forward on the principle of Design and Develop in India and Italy and Deliver for the World."

India And South Korea Discuss Strengthening Defence Ties, Creating Avenues For Joint Development

Seoul,20/5: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held a meeting with South Korean Minister for Defence Acquisition Programme Administration, Lee Yong-chul in Seoul on Wednesday with both sides agreeing to make efforts to create avenues for joint development, production and exports.

"Had a fruitful meeting with the South Korean Minister for Defense Acquisition Program Administration, Mr. Lee Yong-chul in Seoul. We agreed to harness the symbiotic efforts to create avenues for Joint Development, Joint Production and Joint Exports," Singh posted on X after the meeting. "Roadmap to unlock the potential of the ambitious KIND-X initiative to synergise the innovation ecosystems of two countries was discussed," he added. Earlier in the day, Defence Minister Singh held a meeting with his South Korean counterpart Ahn Gyu Back in Seoul, discussing ways to further deepen the defence



cooperation between two nations. "Held an excellent meeting with my South Korean counterpart, Ahn Gyu Back in Seoul. We discussed ways to further deepen India-Republic of Korea defence, defence industry and strategic cooperation, with a shared commitment towards regional peace, stability and technological collaboration," Singh posted on X. "It was a

highly productive meeting as India and Korea exchanged Agreements on Promoting Defence Cyber Cooperation, between National Defence College of India and Korea National Defence University of RoK and UN Peacekeeping Cooperation making our partnership stronger and multidimensional. Looking forward to strengthening the

special strategic partnership between our nations," he added. Rajnath Singh also laid wreath at the National Cemetery of Korea and paid homage to the brave soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice in service of their nation. "Laid wreath at the National Cemetery of Korea and paid homage to the brave soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice in service of their nation. Their courage, dedication and spirit of patriotism remain an enduring source of inspiration. India stands in solidarity with the Republic of Korea in honouring the legacy of its heroes," he stated. Singh arrived in Seoul on Tuesday on an official visit aimed at further strengthening defence cooperation and strategic partnership between India and South Korea. He expressed confidence that his visit to South Korea will provide an opportunity to deepen bilateral ties and enhance collaboration in areas of mutual interest.

Air Chief Marshal Singh Receives Guard Of Honour In Sri Lanka, Pays Tribute To IPKF Martyrs

Colombo,20/5: Chief of the Air Staff of the Indian Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, received a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) Headquarters during his official visit to the island nation, marking a key diplomatic and Defence engagement between the two countries. Taking to social media platform X on Wednesday, the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka posted: "The Chief of the Air Staff was ceremonially received with a Guard of Honour at SLAF headquarters prior to formal meetings on 19 May 2026 and prior to his Call On with Commander of SLAF. He also called on the Deputy Minister of Defence Maj Gen Aruna Jayasekara (Retd) and the Secretary Defence AVM Sampath Thuyacontha (Retd)." "ACM A.P. Singh paid his respects to the IPKF martyrs by laying a wreath at the monument in Battaramulla," it added. The visit comes amid efforts to further strengthen India-Sri Lanka

military cooperation and enhance coordination in the Indian Ocean Region. The Chief of the Air Staff is in Sri Lanka for a three-day official visit aimed at strengthening bilateral Defence cooperation and enhancing military-to-military engagement between the two neighbours. He will remain in the island nation until May 21, according to the Sri Lanka Air Force. In another post, the High Commission informed: "The Chief of Air Staff of the Indian Air Force was warmly welcomed at the Sri Lanka Air Force Headquarters. Subsequently, a meeting was held between him and the Commander of the Sri Lanka Air Force." "He also met with Deputy Minister of Defence Major General (Retd), Aruna Jayasekara, and Secretary to the Ministry of Defence, Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Sampath Thuyacontha." Air Chief

Marshal A.P. Singh also paid floral tribute to the Indian Peace Keeping Force Monument located in Battaramulla," it added. During the visit, Air Chief



Marshal Singh held discussions with Sri Lankan Defence leadership, including his counterpart in the Sri Lankan Air Force, focussing on strengthening operational cooperation and expanding Defence ties. He also met Sri Lanka's Deputy Defence Minister and Defence Secretary, underlining continued high-level engagement between the two countries. The visit reflects growing Defence collaboration between India and Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean Region.

India's Core Infra Industries Clock 1.7 Per Cent Growth In April

New Delhi, 20/5: The combined index of India's eight core infrastructure industries increased by 1.7 per cent during April this year, compared to the same month of the previous year, with cement, steel and electricity recording a positive growth, according to data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry on Wednesday. The final growth rate of the eight core industries for March was observed at 1.2 per cent. The cumulative growth rate of the index of eight core industries during April to March, 2025-26 now works out 2.7 per cent as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Steel production recorded a 6.2 per cent increase in April over the same month of the previous year, while the cement sector clocked a robust 9.5 per cent growth during the month as demand for these products stayed buoyant due to large government investments in big ticket infrastructure projects such as highways, ports and railways. Electricity generation increased by 4.1 per cent in April,



compared to the same month of the previous year. However, coal production decreased by 8.7 per cent during the month while crude oil output declined by 3.9 per cent. The production of natural gas fell by 4.3 per cent in April this year compared to the same month last year while the output of refinery

products fell 0.5 per cent during the month. Besides, fertiliser production declined by 8.6 per cent during the month as the supply of raw material was hit due to the Middle East conflict. The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) measures the combined and individual performance of production of

eight core industries—Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement and Electricity. The eight core industries comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and are a good indicator of the overall industrial growth in the economy.

India Stays World's Fastest-Growing Economy Recording 6.4 Pc Rise Despite Iran War Fallout

United Nations: India will remain the world's fastest-growing major economy, recording a rise of 6.4 per cent this year, showing resilience in a world buffeted by Iran war's fallout, according to the world organisation. "We have seen structurally very robust growth in India, which has been driven by consumer demand, by public investment, but also by strong performance in services exports", Ingo Pitterle, the UN's senior economist heading its Global Economic Monitoring Branch, said on Tuesday. "These main drivers will largely remain intact", he said, briefing reporters on the mid-year update to the World Economic Situation and Prospects report. The report downgraded the growth rate of India's gross domestic product by 0.2 per cent from the projection of 6.6 made in January, but it said that it will catch up to that figure next year. "Back in January, we were expecting quite significantly more growth for India, so this is a downgrade", Shantanu Mukherjee, the director of UN's Economic Analysis and Policy Division, said. But, he added, "India is a large economy well diversified", and there have been improvements like some structural changes recently, and improvements in tax revenues. "On dealing with the energy crisis from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran and its far-reaching impact, the report said, "India's diversified energy sourcing and structural buffers, including its refining infrastructure, ample foreign exchange reserves, and fiscal space to manage fuel prices, may limit the direct pass-through of higher crude prices". The report lowered the world growth rate to 2.5 per cent, also by 0.2 per cent from the projection made in January before the Iran war, which led to Tehran choking off most energy supplies sailing through the Strait of Hormuz. "The crisis in the Middle East has delivered another major shock to the world economy, testing the resilience of global growth, stoking inflationary pressures and further challenging the prospects for sustainable development", the report said. But it pointed out that there is substantial variation among countries and the projections are pulled up "by the performance of large economies, most notably China and India". After India, the next fastest-growing major economy is China, clocking a rate of 4.6 per cent this year before dipping to 4.5 per cent next year, according to the report.

Gold, Silver Prices Fall Over 1 Pc Amid Rising US Inflation Concerns

Mumbai, 20/5: Gold and silver prices declined sharply on Wednesday, with both precious metals falling over 1 per cent amid rising concerns over higher US interest rates. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures (June 5) declined as much as 0.7 per cent or Rs 1,121 to hit an intraday low of Rs 1,57,959 as of 11:17 am. The yellow metal was trading at Rs 1,58,369, down 0.45 per cent or Rs 711. It touched an intraday high of Rs 1,60,378, rising 0.81 per cent or Rs 1,298, according to the exchange. Meanwhile, silver futures (July 3) also witnessed selling pressure, slipping 1.21 per cent, or Rs 3,269, to Rs 2,66,850, its intraday low so far. The white metal was trading at Rs 2,68,970, down 0.43 per cent or Rs 1,149. It recorded an intraday high of Rs 2,69,605, lower by 0.19 per cent or Rs 514. Earlier in the day, gold and silver opened on the MCX at Rs 1,58,974 and Rs 2,67,230, respectively. In the international market as well, precious metals were trading lower. COMEX gold declined 0.49 per cent to \$4,462 per ounce, while COMEX silver



slipped 0.17 per cent to \$73.868 per ounce. According to commodity market experts, gold prices remained under pressure as investors assessed rising inflation risks and the possibility of higher US interest rates. They noted that geopolitical tensions also continued to weigh on sentiment after US President Donald Trump warned that Washington could resume strikes on Iran within "two or three days" if Tehran failed to accept Washington's peace terms. The ongoing conflict has disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, pushing crude oil prices higher and intensifying global

inflationary pressures. Analysts added that rising inflation concerns have reduced expectations of US Federal Reserve rate cuts while increasing speculation around possible rate hikes later this year. For silver, experts said the metal has additionally erased recent gains that were supported by optimism around AI-linked stocks and rising demand from data-centre infrastructure expansion. Meanwhile, domestic stock markets opened lower on Wednesday, with benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty trading in negative territory during early trade.

Indian markets end higher amid global weakness; autos, financials and oil & gas lead recovery

New Delhi, 20/5: Indian equity benchmarks closed in the green on Wednesday, managing modest gains despite weakness across major Asian markets, as buying in auto, financial and oil & gas stocks helped domestic indices recover from intraday lows. The BSE Sensex rose 117.54 points, or 0.16 per cent, to settle at 75,318.39, while the NSE Nifty 50 gained 41 points, or 0.17 per cent, to close at 23,659. The GIFT Nifty traded at 23,671, indicating steady sentiment in domestic equities. Sectorally, the Nifty Oil & Gas index emerged as the top gainer, rising 1.67 per cent to 11,367.15, followed by the Nifty Auto index, which advanced 0.82 per cent to 25,909.35. Realty stocks also witnessed buying interest, with the Nifty Realty index climbing 0.68 per cent to 767.90. Banking stocks traded with a positive bias as the Nifty PSU Bank index gained 0.50 per cent to 7,976.30, while the Nifty Private Bank index rose 0.27 per cent to 26,035.95. However, weakness persisted in select sectors. The Nifty Media index declined 1.43 per cent to 1,400.30, while the Nifty FMCG and IT indices fell 0.63 per cent and 0.46 per cent, respectively. The Nifty



Financial Services 25/50 index remained largely flat, slipping marginally by 0.01 per cent. Commenting on the market trend, Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments, said, "Markets recovered from intraday lows, supported by

selective buying in large cap stocks across autos, financials, and oil & gas. Autos and financials gained on relatively better Q4 earnings, while recent fuel price hikes supported sentiment for OMCs and refiners. Realty stocks also witnessed value buying after

Sensex, Nifty End Higher After Sharp Recovery In Final Hour

Mumbai, 20/7: Indian benchmark equity indices recovered all intraday losses in the final hour of trade to end Wednesday's session on a positive note, supported by gains in oil & gas and auto stocks. The Nifty closed at 23,659, up 41 points, or 0.17 per cent. During the session, the index touched an intra-day high of 23,690.90 and a low of 23,397.30. The Sensex also ended near the day's high at 75,318.39, gaining 117.54 points, or 0.16 per cent. The 30-share index had fallen sharply during intra-day trade to touch a low of 74,529.41 before recovering strongly to hit a high of 75,406.18. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that fresh supply pressure emerged near higher levels, keeping the 23,700-23,800 zone as a key near-term resistance area. "A sustained breakout above 23,800 could strengthen momentum further toward the psychological 24,000 mark," an analyst stated. "On the downside, the 23,400 level now acts as an important immediate support zone, while the broader 23,300 region continues to remain a



crucial support base for the index," a market expert mentioned. Among the top gainers on the Nifty index were Hindalco Industries and Bajaj Auto, which supported the broader market recovery. In the broader market segment, the Nifty MidCap ended 0.49 per cent higher, while the Nifty SmallCap rose 0.04 per cent. Sectorally, the Nifty Oil & Gas and the Nifty Auto outperformed the market, aided by buying interest in energy and automobile counters. On the other hand, the Nifty Media and the Nifty FMCG ended among the

top laggards during the session. Despite weak intra-day sentiment, strong buying in heavyweight stocks during the closing hour helped benchmark indices settle in the green, indicating resilience in domestic equities. "Markets are now awaiting the US Fed's April policy minutes for further direction on the interest rate outlook. Overall, the broader trend remains range-bound with a negative bias, with sector and stock specific opportunities likely to dominate," an analyst stated.

India saw much lower hike in petrol/diesel prices than neighbouring and other countries

New Delhi, 20/5: India witnessed a relatively much lower hike in petrol and diesel prices as compared to neighbouring and several other countries following the global oil supply disruption that began in February 2026 due to the Strait of Hormuz crisis. International Brent crude oil prices have surged sharply since the disruption, crossing USD 120 per barrel and currently trading around USD 110 per barrel as global energy supply chains faced pressure and oil inventories were tightened. The petrol prices in India increased by 4.2 per cent between February and May 2026, while diesel prices rose by 4.4 per cent during the same period. While as per data by the GlobalPetrolPrices, in comparison, Myanmar recorded petrol price increases of 89.7 per cent and diesel price increases of 112.7 per cent. Several other countries, like Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka,

U.S., China and a number of European countries, also saw high double-digit increases in fuel prices during the same period. Most of the countries have passed on the increase in crude oil prices directly to consumers, while India implemented multiple excise duty reductions and retail fuel price cuts between 2021 and 2026 to moderate the impact of rising crude oil prices. As per the government data, these included excise duty cuts in November 2021 and May 2022, retail fuel price reductions in March 2024, another excise reduction in April 2025 and a Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) reduction announced on March 27, 2026. The March 2026 SAED cut reduced petrol excise duty to Rs 3 per litre and diesel excise duty to zero. A part of the increase in global crude oil prices during the Hormuz disruption was absorbed through government revenue adjustments and support

from oil marketing companies. The March 2026 excise duty reduction alone could have an impact of around Rs 30,000 crore on government revenues during the fiscal year. Oil bonds worth around Rs 1.34 lakh crore were issued to oil marketing companies by the UPA government between 2005 and 2010. More than Rs 1.30 lakh crore in principal has since been redeemed along with interest payments over the last few years. Fuel prices also vary across Indian states due to differences in Value Added Tax (VAT) rates imposed by state governments. According to the data by govt, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala were among the states with relatively higher VAT, translating into higher petrol and diesel prices, while Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Goa and Assam recorded comparatively lower fuel prices because of lower VAT rate.

Indian rupee plummets to 96.90 historic low as equity markets collapse in morning trade

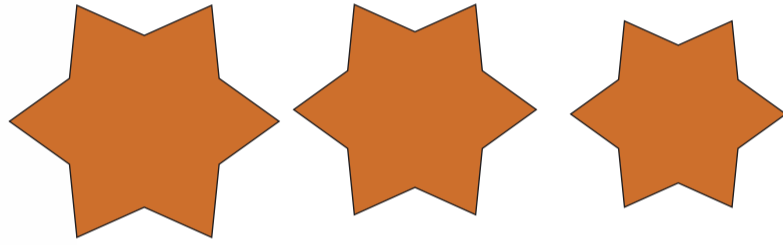
NEWDELHI, 20/4: Indian currency dipped to a fresh historic bottom of 96.90 against the US dollar during early trading hours on Wednesday. This downward trajectory synchronized with sharp declines across domestic stock indices, where the BSE Sensex plummeted by 517 points to evaluate at 74,667.51, while the NSE Nifty dragged downward below the 23,500 threshold. Investors remained highly cautious after the offshore Gift Nifty indicated a weak opening sequence for local equities earlier in the morning. Persistent geopolitical friction involving Washington and Tehran keeps energy import costs highly inflated worldwide. This ongoing global tension forces Foreign Institutional Investors to offload domestic shares rapidly, resulting in over 24 billion dollars in withdrawals this year alone. The current domestic currency depreciation reflects a broader capital flight toward secure US Treasury assets. Market experts note that the local unit remains highly vulnerable to disruptions along critical trade routes like the Strait of Hormuz. The Reserve Bank of India may deploy aggressive currency intervention tactics or implement strict import curbs on precious metals to stabilize the economic situation. Meanwhile, global oil benchmarks hover near 110 dollars per barrel, sustaining severe inflationary pressures on developing economies.





Amitabh Bachchan Begins Blog With Ramcharitmanas Amid News Of Hospitalization

As the news about his hospitalisation is doing the rounds, megastar Amitabh Bachchan shared a cryptic poem beginning with the verses from "Ramcharitmanas" and wished everyone "love". It was on May 19, when it was reported that Amitabh had been admitted to Nanavati Hospital's VIP wing since May 16 due to stomach-related issues. However it was later reported that the megastar "underwent a routine check-up", had "been discharged" and "returned home after the examination." However, taking to his blog at 12.19 AM on Wednesday, Big B began his blog with first the dateline: "Peel Pilwadi, Mumbai, May 19, 2026 / May 20." He then mentioned: "Mangal Bhavan Amangal Haari." The octageanrian then wrote a poetry: "Cheel jab hove shaant toh bhaiya, tote bolan shuru karein. Ir bir fatte, kahan "chal hamau", pilave shuru karein!!!!" "Bajre di roti kha di, phoo padiyon da saag re. Munh mein daalan laage jaise, bolan laage kaag re!!!! Ek rahe 'Hill' bhaiya ki padhai ka darpan; Aur doosar Wellington ki yaad!!." He concluded the post with: "Love, Prayers and more." On the work front, Big B was last seen in the film Vettaiyan directed by T. J. Gnanavel. The film stars Rajinikanth, Fahadh Faasil, Rana Daggubati, Manju Warriar, Ritika Singh, Dushara Vijayan, Rohini, Rao Ramesh, Abhirami and Ramesh Thilak. He is currently with filmmaker Nag Ashwin's "Kalki 2898 AD." The film also stars Kamal Haasan and Prabhas. He will also reportedly be seen in Nitesh Tiwary's upcoming magnum opus "Ramayana: Part 1", which also stars Ranbir Kapoor, Sai Pallavi, Yash, and Sunny Deol. The icon will reportedly play the character of Jatayu. Amitabh was last seen on the small screen in the recently concluded edition of "Kaun Banega Crorepati", a television game show. It is the official Hindi adaptation of Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Franchise.



Fans Compare Off Campus Star Mika Abdalla To Young Mahima Chaudhry

The new Prime Video series Off Campus is creating massive buzz online, but apart from the chemistry between the lead actors, another topic has taken over social media. Fans are now obsessing over the uncanny resemblance between actor Mika Abdalla and Bollywood star Mahima Chaudhry. Viewers say Mika Abdalla, who plays Allie Hayes in the series, looks strikingly similar to Mahima Chaudhry during her iconic Pardes era. Soon after clips from the series went viral, fans began sharing side-by-side comparisons of Mika Abdalla and Mahima Chaudhry online. One Instagram user posted a dancing clip of Mika from the show alongside old photos of Mahima and wrote: "Plot twist: Mahima Chaudhry's real daughter was in Off Campus all along." The post quickly gained attention, with many users agreeing with the comparison. Another fan



commented: "She is literally a replica of Mahima Chaudhry." A different user wrote: "She's a dupe of Mahima Chaudhry from Pardes." Some users even joked about the resemblance, with one comment saying: "If Hannah Montana and Mahima Chaudhry had a baby." The comparisons have now become one of the most talked-about entertainment discussions online.

SPORTS

Hockey: India U18 Women Win 4-1 Against Australia In Final Match Of The Series

Bhopal, 20/5: The Indian U18 women's hockey team produced a dominant display to defeat Australia 4-1 in the fourth and final match of the series at the Udhav Das Mehta (Bhai Ji) Central SAI Centre here on Wednesday. Australia took the lead early in the first quarter through Aurora Kovacevich (8'), putting the visitors ahead. India, however, responded quickly with captain Sweetie Kujur (13') scoring the equaliser before the end of the opening quarter. The hosts continued their momentum in the second quarter and took the lead when Diya (25') found the back of the net to give India a 2-1 advantage heading into halftime. India maintained control in the second half and extended their lead in the third quarter through Priyanka Minz (44'). Nausheen Naz (50') then added another goal in the final quarter to cap off a dominant win for the hosts. The victory marked a strong finish for the Indian team in a hard-fought series, preparing them well for the U18 Asia Cup beginning later this month in Japan. Australia won the four-match series, which was part of an



exposure tour, 3-1. After India fell 3-4 to Australia U-18 women in a closely contested series opener. The hosts suffered a 1-4 loss against the visitors in the second match. Diya (11') gave India an early lead in the first quarter, allowing the hosts to stay in control during the initial exchanges. However, Australia staged a powerful

comeback, with Anneliese Cullen (26'), Giselle Thompson (31'), Aurora Kovacevich (36'), and Stella Bartholomeusz (48') all scoring to secure Australia's second consecutive win of the tour.

India fought hard but lost the third match of the series. Australia took an early lead in the first quarter when Anneliese

Cullen (5') scored. India responded well just before the end of the quarter, with Sandeepa Kumari (15') scoring a fine equaliser to make it 1-1. However, the visitors regained the lead early in the second quarter through a goal from Stella Bartholomeusz (17'), but the hosts could not find a second goal to equalise.

Dhurandhar 2 : Delhi HC asks Centre to examine claims relating sensitive armed forces details

The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre and the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to examine allegations made by military personnel that the film Dhurandhar: The Revenge disclosed sensitive details relating to military and intelligence operations. A Division Bench of Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia directed the petitioner to submit a representation before the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the CBFC, and asked the authorities to consider the concerns raised in the plea. The petition was filed by Deepak Kumar, a personnel of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), through advocate Jagjeet Singh. The plea stated that the petitioner is presently posted at the Force Headquarters of the SSB in RK Puram, New Delhi, according to the counsel for the petitioner, a representation had already been sent on March 23, 2026, to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as well as the CBFC, raising objections regarding the film. The plea alleged that certain scenes in



the movie starring Ranveer Singh showed operational methods, tactical procedures and intelligence-related activities in a manner that could affect national security and put undercover agents at risk. It was argued that the movie depicted certain locations and actions allegedly based on real-life military and intelligence operations too explicitly. According to the petitioner, such portrayals could help hostile agencies identify operational patterns used by

Indian forces. During the hearing, the High Court observed that even if the film was fictional and made for entertainment purposes, the impact of such depictions could not be completely ignored. The Bench disposed of the PIL after directing the authorities to treat the writ petition itself as a representation and take an appropriate decision on the issues raised. The petition had also sought guidelines for "Spy Protocol Movies" and a stay on the screening of Dhurandhar: The Revenge.

'I Was Completely Spent': Virat Kohli Finally Reveals The Real Reason Behind Quitting India's Test Captaincy

NEWDELHI, 20/5: Speaking during the RCB Innovation Lab event, Kohli admitted that the burden of leading India across formats while carrying the expectations of the batting unit completely drained him. "I was completely spent. There was nothing left in the tank," Kohli said while reflecting on the toughest phase of his cricket career. 'I Was Completely Consumed By Leadership' Virat Kohli resigned as India's Test captain on January 15, 2022, shortly after India lost the Test series in South Africa. At the time, the decision shocked fans across the cricketing world. Now, the former skipper says he had reached a stage where the pressure of leadership

became emotionally exhausting. "I became the focal point of our batting unit and also the focal point of leadership. I did not realise how much load both those things would bring into my daily life," Kohli said. The star batter explained that his obsession with keeping Indian cricket at the top made him ignore his own mental well-being for years. "But because I was so driven to make sure Indian cricket stayed on top, I did not really pay attention to myself. By the time I left captaincy, I was completely consumed by it. It was gruesome," he added. Kohli Says Nobody Asked If He Was Okay One of the most emotional moments from Kohli's interaction came when he revealed how

isolated leadership made him feel. The former India captain said that during his long tenure, he rarely had the opportunity to think about himself because leadership required him to constantly focus on others. "Leadership is more about management than coaching. You are always thinking about your team and how to get the best out of people," Kohli explained. He then made a deeply personal revelation. "Towards the end of my captaincy tenure, I realised nobody had asked me for almost nine years — 'How are you doing?'" The statement quickly went viral on social media, with fans praising Kohli's honesty and vulnerability.

Salman Khan wishes bodyguard Shera on birthday hours after angry Instagram posts

Mumbai: Just hours after strongly reacting to photographers outside Mumbai's Hinduja Hospital, Salman Khan shared a birthday wish for his close friend and longtime bodyguard Shera. Salman took to his Instagram Stories and posted a picture with Shera, aka Gurmeet Singh Jolly. In the photo, the actor is seen standing close to Shera with his arm around his shoulder. Along with the picture, he wrote a caption that read, Happy bday Shera...@beingshera. Earlier, Salman had shared a series of angry posts after videos from outside Hinduja Hospital went viral.

The videos from outside the hospital showed Salman visibly upset with photographers gathered outside the premises. In one of the posts, the actor said he has always supported the press, but was hurt to see photographers trying to make content out of someone's pain. Salman wrote, "If I see any press at a hospital enjoying my pain. The press that I have stood for interacted with, took care to make sure that they also earn their bread n butter." In another strong message, Salman said he may be 60, but he has "not forgotten how to fight". He wrote, "Saath saal ka ho gaya

hoon lekin ladna nahin bhoola yeh yaad rakh lena, jail mein dalo ge haaa haar (I'm 60-years-old, but I haven't forgotten how to fight - remember that. Even if you put me in jail)." On the work front, Salman will next be seen in the film 'Maatrubhumi', where he will share screen space with Chitrangada Singh. The film, earlier titled 'Battle of Galwan', is based on the 2020 Galwan Valley clash between India and China. Directed by Apoorva Lakhia and produced under Salman Khan Films, 'Maatrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace' is expected to release soon.