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PM Modi, Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides hold delegation-level talks in Delhi

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides on Friday held delegation-level talks, focused on expanding the bilateral cooperation between New Delhi and Nicosia.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri were among those present.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, both leaders were expected to have extensive discussions on trade, investment, technology, education, culture, mobility, defence, and security, as well as emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, fintech, innovation, and research. The two leaders are also slated to exchange views on regional and global developments, including coordination in multilateral forums.

Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides arrived in New Delhi on Thursday, following the Mumbai leg of his visit.

The Ministry of External Affairs earlier noted how his visit builds on the momentum generated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Cyprus in June 2025 and reflects the shared commitment to further strengthening the India-Cyprus partnership."

As part of the official state ceremonies, PM Modi will host a luncheon in honour of the visiting dignitary, and President Droupadi Murmu will receive President Christodoulides and host an official banquet at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Earlier, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called



on the Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides in New Delhi.

In a post on X, Jaishankar said, "Value his positive sentiments and guidance for strengthening our bilateral ties and India - EU cooperation."

The New Delhi leg follows the initial phase of the four-day State Visit, which

began when President Christodoulides arrived in Mumbai on Wednesday. Visiting from May 20 to 23 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it marks his first visit to the country in his current capacity, according to an official statement by the MEA. The Cyprus President is accompanied by a high-level delegation, including Foreign Minister Constantinos Kombos, Transport Minister Alexis Vafeades, and senior officials and business leaders. The engagement carries heightened diplomatic weight as the visit comes less than a year after PM Modi's landmark trip to Cyprus in June 2025, the first by an Indian Prime Minister to the Mediterranean nation in over two decades. Adding further strategic significance to the engagement, Cyprus currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The official itinerary commenced in Maharashtra, where President Christodoulides initially touched down and was accorded a ceremonial welcome by Governor Jishnu Dev Varma and Chief

Minister Devendra Fadnis at the Mumbai airport on Wednesday. In an earlier post on X detailing that leg of the trip, the MEA had highlighted that India and Cyprus share time-tested, close relations rooted in shared values and strong people-to-people ties.

While in Mumbai, the Cyprus President participated in a business forum specifically aimed at boosting commercial and investment ties between the two nations, with a strong focus on expanding broader economic engagement. With both nations looking to mark 65 years of diplomatic relations in 2027, officials have described this state visit as a crucial step in building on the growing momentum of the bilateral partnership and strengthening cooperation within the broader India-European Union framework.

Accident on NH 20: a trailer hit a truck from behind; the driver is dead

Keonjhar : In a shocking incident, the driver of a trailer was died after the trailer hit a truck from behind on NH 20 at the Jhumpura Bypass today. The identity of the deceased driver has not been found.

According to sources, a truck was parked on the Jhumpura Bypass. Early in the morning, a trailer going from the Keonjhar side struck the truck from behind. As a result, the trailer driver was trapped in the cabin. Upon receiving the information, the Jhumpura police went to the place of the incident and rescued the driver with the help of the Firebrigade team. After trying for hours but failing, the fire brigade team rescued the driver by cut the cabin with the help of a machine cutter. Later the driver was taken to Jhumpura Community Health Center for treatment, where a doctor declared him dead. After the incident police seized both vehicles and started an investigation. IIC of Jhumpura Police Station Manas Mahakud said that no report has been received so far. The police are going to the medical center and identifying the dead body.



After the accident, traffic was disrupted on the road for some time. Later, it became normal. Although the cause of the accident is not known, it is said that such accidents occurred due to the carelessness of the driver. It is reported that despite the restrictions, many such accidents have occurred due to illegal parking of trucks on the roadside on various roads of Keonjhar district, resulting in loss of life. Apart from this, since the police department is not taking a strict approach, the common people are feeling unsafe in traffic and accidents are happening almost every day.

Delhi HC refers Priya Kapur's plea on educational expenses and overseas property payments to roster bench

New Delhi : The Delhi High Court on Friday referred to the roster bench an application filed by Priya Kapur seeking clarification/modification of the Court's April 30 interim order in the ongoing dispute concerning the estate of late industrialist Sunjay Kapur.

The plea seeks permission to utilise funds from Sunjay Kapur's Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) account towards the educational expenses of Samaira and Kiaan, children of Sunjay Kapur and actor Karisma Kapoor, along with certain maintenance obligations linked to overseas properties.

The matter was heard by Justice Jyoti Singh, who observed that the application was in the nature of seeking variation of the earlier order and directed that it be placed before the roster bench on May 26.

Senior Advocate Rajiv Nayar, appearing for Priya Kapur, submitted that the bank accounts permitted to be operated under the April 30 order no longer had sufficient funds to meet ongoing educational



expenses.

He argued that adequate funds were available in the EPF account and sought permission to utilise the same for payment of school and university fees, accommodation and living expenses abroad, as well as statutory, mortgage, insurance and utility payments connected with foreign properties.

The Court noted that Priya Kapur had earlier undertaken not to operate the EPF account and observed that the present application effectively sought variation of the earlier directions.

The application states that the balances protected under the interim order would continue to remain preserved and that the relief sought is limited to ensuring continuity

of educational expenses and recurring overseas property-related payments during the pendency of the proceedings.

Earlier, Priya Kapur had sought modification of portions of the Court's April 30 judgment to permit withdrawals from the Employees' Provident Fund account of late Sunjay Kapur strictly for payment of ongoing and future education-related expenses of Samaira Kapur and Kiaan Raj Kapur, including school and university fees, boarding, lodging and reasonable travel expenses in India and abroad.

The plea also seeks permission for the payment of school fees of another defendant enrolled in an overseas school.

Delhi High Court grants Umar Khalid three-day interim bail in Delhi riots conspiracy case

New Delhi : The Delhi High Court on Friday granted three-day interim bail to Activist and former JNU student leader Umar Khalid in the larger conspiracy case linked to the 2020 northeast Delhi riots, taking an "empathetic view" in light of his mother's surgery.

The Court granted interim bail from 7 am on June 1 till 5 pm on June 3 on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh. The Court directed that Khalid shall remain within the NCR region, stay at his residence and visit only the hospital during the

period of interim release.

Khalid had approached the High Court challenging the May 19 order of the trial court, which had rejected his plea for interim bail.

While granting relief, the High Court noted that Khalid had previously been granted interim bail on multiple occasions for family ceremonies and had complied with the conditions imposed upon him.

The Court also observed that Khalid is "one of the key conspirators" in the case, but nevertheless

considered it appropriate to take an empathetic view owing to the medical condition and scheduled surgery of his mother.

Earlier, Khalid had moved the Delhi High Court seeking interim bail for 15 days from May 22 to June 5 and setting aside the trial court order dated May 19, which rejected his plea for temporary release in the 2020 northeast Delhi riots larger conspiracy case.

The appeal, filed under Section 21(4) of the National Investigation

Agency Act, states that Khalid seeks interim bail to attend the Chehllum ceremony of his deceased maternal uncle and to take care of his 62-year-old mother, who is scheduled to undergo lump excision surgery on June 2.

The trial court had earlier dismissed Khalid's interim bail plea on May 19, observing that the grounds cited by him for temporary release were "not reasonable". Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai of the Karkardooma Courts had held that

attending the Chehllum ceremony of his uncle was "not that necessary" and also observed that Khalid's sisters and father could take care of his mother during the surgery.

Khalid has been in custody since September 2020 in the larger conspiracy case arising out of FIR 59/2020. The prosecution alleges that the riots were part of a pre-planned conspiracy linked to protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), allegations which Khalid has denied.

Delhi-NCR taxi, auto unions strike enters second day over fare revision

New Delhi : The protests by commercial vehicle operators and taxi unions across Delhi-NCR have entered their second day on Friday. The demonstrations are against the hike in fuel and CNG prices for commercial vehicles while pressing for fare revision.

The 72-hour strike was announced by several transport organisations,

including the All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) and Chalak Shakti Union. These bodies represent truck operators, private bus owners, cab drivers, and maxi-cab drivers in the region.

However, the daily commute at the New Delhi Railway Station saw little disruption in most areas of the capital. Auto-rickshaws

and cabs were running as usual on Friday, with minimal impact on services.

Drivers of different cab services pointed out that cab fares in Delhi-NCR have not been revised in almost 10 years, while costs for fuel and vehicle upkeep have climbed significantly. They noted that rising rates for CNG, petrol, along with increased spending on

Domestic expenditure, have placed drivers under heavy financial strain.

These drivers are calling for the CNG and fuel surcharge to be withdrawn and for taxi fares to be adjusted upward. They cautioned that ongoing financial strain could severely impact the earnings and livelihoods of thousands of drivers across Delhi.

The protest is set to continue by Saturday, May 23, with the next steps hinging on the government's response.

Earlier, AIMTC warned that if the Delhi government failed to address their demands and revise fares immediately, the agitation could intensify into a larger movement in the coming days.

Future of Cross-Voting MLAs Remains Uncertain

Bhubaneswar (DNS): The Rajya Sabha election may be over, but it has left behind deep political scars. Both the BJD and Congress have intensified efforts to disqualify party legislators who allegedly betrayed their leadership by cross-voting during the election. Whether the two parties will succeed in taking action against the rebel MLAs remains to be seen. However, the larger question now concerns the political future of the 11 legislators who defied party directives.

Political observers believe the careers of these MLAs now hang in the balance. Though the legislators involved in cross-voting have defended themselves and claimed innocence, many within political circles are unwilling to believe that they acted without inducement or

influence, allegedly linked to Dilip Ray.

Eight BJD MLAs — Chakramani Kanhar, Subhasini Jena, Souvik Biswal, Debi Ranjan Tripathy, Sanatan Mahakud, Aravind Mahapatra, Nanda Kishore Mallick and Ramakant Bhoi — along with three Congress MLAs, Sofia Firdous, Ramesh Jena and Dasarathi Gamango, have been suspended by their respective parties for cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha election.

The BJD and Congress had jointly supported independent candidate Dr. Datteshwar Hota. However, these MLAs reportedly voted in favour of the BJP-backed independent candidate, defying party instructions. With disciplinary action already initiated against

them, the possibility of their return to their original parties appears increasingly remote.

Political analysts point out that had the issue been a routine internal dispute, the suspension might eventually have been withdrawn. But since the MLAs are perceived to have publicly embarrassed their party leadership, especially by going against direct instructions, reconciliation now seems unlikely. Statements made by some of the suspended legislators against party leadership after disciplinary action have further widened the divide.

Observers say that given the political style and personality of Naveen Patnaik, it is difficult to imagine him easily accepting the rebel MLAs back into the party fold.

Most of the suspended legislators are relatively



young and either first-time or second-time MLAs, with potentially long political careers ahead. This has led to growing speculation about their next political move.

Discussions in political circles suggest that a new organisation called "Biju Legacy" has emerged in the aftermath of the Rajya Sabha episode. The group is

reportedly being guided by experienced political figures with long-standing influence in Odisha politics. Though the organisation has not yet transformed into a political party, supporters are said to be exploring the possibility of shaping it into a regional political force in the future.

However, financial resources remain the biggest challenge. Since the group

allegedly united behind Dilip Ray during the Rajya Sabha election, many are now looking towards him for support and leadership. Political observers note that running a regional political party requires substantial resources. Veteran leader Bijoy Mohapatra is believed to understand this reality well, having himself faced setbacks while attempting to build a regional political platform in the past.

Sources suggest that while Dilip Ray alone may not be able to fund an entire political movement, he has reportedly been entrusted with mobilising financial support. If he succeeds, "Biju Legacy" could eventually evolve into a full-fledged political party. Otherwise, it may remain merely a socio-political organisation.

There is also speculation

that if the organisation takes political shape, the 11 rebel MLAs could join it and contest the 2029 elections under its banner, thereby attempting to rebuild their political futures. Otherwise, the BJP may become their only viable political destination.

Yet joining the BJP may not be straightforward for all of them. Local BJP leaders who previously fought against these MLAs in elections and suffered defeats or political hostility may resist accommodating them within the party. Analysts warn that such internal resentment could create problems for the BJP itself. It is also possible, they say, that the BJP may eventually distance itself from some of these legislators.

Among the rebel MLAs, Aravind Mahapatra and Sanatan Mahakud are

believed to face fewer obstacles in joining the BJP. Others, however, may encounter considerable resistance.

At present, none of the 11 MLAs can formally join the BJP without risking disqualification from the Assembly under anti-defection laws. As a result, they may have to wait until the next election cycle before making any decisive political move.

Political observers therefore conclude that the future of these cross-voting MLAs remains highly uncertain. Even if they contest future elections, there is no guarantee of victory. Many people, they say, view the rebellion as an act of betrayal against party leadership — a move that may ultimately damage the MLAs' own political credibility as much as it hurt their parties.

Rengali Turns Into a Furnace: Nature and Livelihoods Choking Under Industrial Smoke

Sambalpur, May 22 : The Rengali region of Sambalpur district has witnessed a massive transformation over the last 25 years. Once known for its green forests, fertile farmlands, rivers and hills, the area is now rapidly turning into a landscape dominated by smoke, dust and industrial pollution due to unchecked industrialisation.

A large number of sponge iron plants, power plants, factories and mining projects have altered not only the geography of Rengali but also the lives, health and future of the people living there. While industries continue to expand in the name of development, serious concerns are being raised over environmental destruction,

rising temperatures and public health hazards.

Recent reports indicate that air pollution in Rengali has reached alarming levels. The Air Quality Index (AQI) in the industrial belt reportedly crossed 300 earlier this year, placing it in the "very unhealthy" category. PM10 levels were recorded at more than four times the permissible limit.

Environmental activists and local residents allege that the region is slowly turning into a "heat island" due to large-scale deforestation and industrial emissions. Areas that once experienced cool mornings and fresh air are now facing unbearable heat and toxic winds. Residents say stepping outside during the daytime feels like

standing over a burning furnace.

Critics argue that the benefits of industrialisation have largely gone to corporate houses, while ordinary people continue to suffer from pollution, loss of farmland and declining environmental quality. Though there are records of industrial production and mining output, there is little accountability regarding the number of trees cut down, rivers polluted or people affected by respiratory and other diseases.

Large-scale tree felling for roads, mining expansion and industrial projects has severely damaged the region's ecological balance. Locals allege that promises of compensatory



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afforestation and environmental protection remained limited to official documents, while ground realities continue to worsen.

Concerns have also been raised over alleged violations of pollution control norms by several industrial units in the area. Earlier this year, authorities reportedly sealed units of a major industrial plant in Rengali following allegations of severe air and water pollution and non-compliance with environmental regulations.

The issue of industrial pollution has also echoed in political circles. Rengali MLA Sudarshan Haripal recently alleged large-scale forest destruction, environmental degradation and lack of employment opportunities for local residents.

Environmental experts say the situation demands urgent intervention, including large-scale plantation drives, strict pollution monitoring, installation of air quality monitoring stations and

stronger enforcement against industries violating environmental laws.

Residents and activists warn that unless immediate corrective measures are taken, Rengali may soon become known not as an industrial growth hub, but as the centre of a major environmental crisis.

The burning question now being asked across the region is:

"How long can development continue at the cost of nature and human life?"

Sai Priya Walkers Club Organises Free Yoga Camp to Mark 40th Anniversary of Walkers International

Rayagada, May 22: On the occasion of the 40th anniversary celebration of Walkers International, Sai Priya Walkers Club, Rayagada, organised a grand free yoga camp promoting the message of "Yoga for a Healthy Life." More than 200 participants from Rayagada town and nearby areas enthusiastically attended the programme. Members of various clubs from Rayagada also joined the event, making the occasion vibrant and successful.

The programme began with a traditional Homa Yajna conducted as per customary rituals, creating a spiritual atmosphere before the formal inauguration of the yoga camp. Speakers at the event highlighted the importance of regular yoga practice in maintaining physical fitness, mental well-being and a disciplined lifestyle.

The event was presided



over by Sai Priya Walkers Club President Jayakrishna Pradhan, while Secretary Jagannath Nayak and Treasurer Baikuntha Rao played active roles in organising and coordinating the programme.

The camp was inaugurated in the presence of founder Subash Behera, Dr. Suresh Kumar, Debaraj Panda, K. Dharmaraju, T. Jayaram, Swami Rajesh Ji and Chaitananda Swamy. Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries spoke about the growing importance of yoga

in today's stressful lifestyle and stressed the need for health awareness and positive living.

During the camp, expert trainers conducted sessions on various yoga postures, pranayama and meditation techniques. Participants actively took part in the sessions and appreciated the initiative taken by the club to encourage healthy living and wellness among the public.

The organisers stated that the objective of the programme was not only to

celebrate the 40-year journey of Walkers International but also to inspire people towards a healthier and more balanced way of life. The event also strengthened social unity as people from different walks of life gathered together with a common goal of promoting fitness and well-being.

The yoga camp concluded on a positive note with participants expressing hope that such health-oriented community programmes would continue in the future for the benefit of society.

West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari meets Rajnath Singh in Delhi

New Delhi : West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Friday met Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in the national capital.

In a post on X, Singh lauded the West Bengal Chief Minister and expressed strong confidence that Adhikari will take the state to greater heights.

"Met with the Chief Minister of West Bengal Suwendu Adhikari in New Delhi. He is a person of rich political and legislative experience. I am confident that he will work towards taking West Bengal to greater heights," said Singh.

During his visit, the West Bengal Chief Minister also met President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan today. "Chief Minister of West

Bengal, Suwendu Adhikari called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan," said the Rashtrapati Bhawan office.

These meetings come after the commencement of fencing work along the India-Bangladesh border in the Phansidewa area of Siliguri subdivision. This fencing work began after the West Bengal government handed over a crucial 27-kilometre stretch of land to the Border Security Force (BSF), marking a major step toward reinforcing border security in the region.

Visuals from the border town showed fencing work underway, with officials initiating groundwork following the long-pending land transfer. The move is expected to bolster surveillance and improve

security infrastructure along the sensitive international border.

Residents of the area expressed relief over the development, calling it a long-awaited measure to address persistent security concerns.

"This is a border area where there was no security before. The environment here was so horrific before that I cannot describe it. Before, we couldn't even raise cows here. Raising cows was the same as surrendering ourselves to the Bangladeshis and Rohingyas. This was a matter of security not only for West Bengal but for the entire country. Today, we feel that thanks to the efforts of the new government and the new Chief Minister, we are safe," said a resident, Anil

Ghosh.

The development comes days after Suwendu Adhikari announced in Howrah that the state government was ready to transfer 27 kilometres of land for fencing along the India-Bangladesh border, along with additional land for Border Outposts (BOPs) and BSF infrastructure. The Chief Minister had said the decision followed renewed coordination with central agencies after earlier delays in land allocation.

The Chief Minister added that the decision taken in the first Cabinet meeting had set the transfer process in motion, with the land to be handed over to the Ministry of Home Affairs within 45 days, after which BSF fencing work would be completed.

District-Level Disaster Management Committee Meeting Held in Puri



PURI : The district administration on Friday held a preparedness meeting on disaster management and mitigation at Sadbhavana Sabhagruha ahead of the monsoon and cyclone season.

Chairing the meeting, Puri Collector and chairman of the District Disaster Management Committee, Divya Jyoti Parida, said that as Puri is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, all departments must remain prepared for floods and cyclones in the coming months. He advised officials to strictly follow the preparedness plan drawn up by the district administration in coordination with various departments.

The Collector directed irrigation and drainage divisions to conduct field

inspections, review ongoing works, identify vulnerable river embankments and undertake repair work. He also asked officials to coordinate with public representatives and submit detailed reports to the administration.

Among those who attended the meeting were Kakatpur MLA Tusharkanti Behera, Pipili MLA Ashrit Pattanayak, Zilla Parishad president Swapnarani Swain and vice-president Swadhin Nayak. They stressed strengthening river embankments and enhancing disaster preparedness measures across the district.

Officials were advised to ensure public awareness before any disaster situation and take adequate measures relating to health services, drinking water, livestock and agriculture.

The district currently has 29 SRC boats. Besides, OSDMA has provided 170 cyclone shelters, while the Red Cross operates nine such shelters. Another 372 buildings have been identified as alternative shelter centres.

The administration informed that a 24x7 control room will function in the district from June 1 to October 31. BDOs and tehsildars have been directed to submit daily situation reports during the period.

The district currently has 29 SRC boats. Besides, OSDMA has provided 170 cyclone shelters, while the Red Cross operates nine such shelters. Another 372 buildings have been identified as alternative shelter centres.

The process of

appointing boat drivers and assistants for flood rescue operations has also been expedited, officials said.

Parida instructed all departments to strictly adhere to the guidelines issued by the State government and the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC). He also directed officials to ensure repair and maintenance of cyclone and flood shelters, stockpile essential commodities such as flattened rice and jaggery, maintain emergency control rooms, and ensure coordination with public representatives, panchayat members and volunteers for dissemination of emergency information.

The Collector further stressed maintaining adequate stocks of food, medicines, anti-venom injections for snakebite

treatment and cattle feed.

Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Sarat Chandra Behera welcomed participants and conducted the proceedings.

Among others present were Chief Development Officer and Puri Municipal Corporation Commissioner Sneha Arugula, ADM (Revenue) Dr Sarat Chandra Mohapatra, ADM (Protocol) Nilamadhab Bhoi, Sub-Collector Raj Kishore Jena, Additional SP Soumya Ranjan Mallick, representatives of MPs and MLAs, panchayat samiti chairpersons, BDOs, tehsildars and district-level officials.

Deputy Collector of the District Emergency Cell Anushrava Gantayat proposed the vote of thanks.

New Delhi to host Quad Foreign Ministers on May 26 as Indo-Pacific strategy sharpens

New Delhi : In a major diplomatic mobilisation, India will host the foreign ministers of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) nations next week to anchor security and development initiatives across the Indo-Pacific.

At the invitation of External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will arrive in New Delhi for an official visit to participate in the high-level meeting on May 26, 2026, according to the MEA press release.

Beyond the multilateral talks, the visit will serve as a hub for critical bilateral diplomacy. The visiting ministers from Australia, Japan, and the US are scheduled to hold individual, one-on-one meetings with Dr Jaishankar and are expected to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The upcoming summit aims to build directly on the framework established during their last gathering in Washington, D.C., on July 1, 2025. Discussions are expected to focus heavily on: Free and Open Indo-Pacific, reaffirming

commitment to maritime security, freedom of navigation, and a rules-based order, evaluating progress on critical technology, climate resilience, and infrastructure delivery and exchanging perspectives on emerging security challenges in the region and broader international developments.

"In keeping with the Quad vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, the Ministers will build on discussions held in Washington, D.C. on 1 July 2025. They will exchange views on advancing Quad cooperation across priority areas, review progress on ongoing Quad initiatives, and reflect on recent developments in the Indo-Pacific region and other international issues of mutual concern", the statement said.

It further noted, "During their visit to New Delhi, the Foreign Ministers of Australia and Japan, and the United States Secretary of State are also expected to hold bilateral meetings with the External Affairs Minister and call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi".

As the leaders gear up

for their visit to New Delhi for the QUAD Foreign Ministers' Meet, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Thursday stated that Washington is actively engaged in discussions with India to significantly broaden energy cooperation, confirming that the strategic partnership will be a focal point during his upcoming official visit.

Rubio noted that his highly anticipated itinerary in New Delhi would feature high-level engagements with ministers from the elite Quad grouping.

"They are a great ally, a great partner. We do a lot of good work with them. And so it is an important trip. I'm glad we're able to do it because I think there'll be a lot for us to talk about," Rubio said.

The top US diplomat further emphasised the deep-rooted institutional cooperation between the two democracies within the plurilateral architecture. "We'll also meet with Quad there, which is important. I think my first meeting as Secretary of State was with the Quad. I'm glad we are able to do it now in India, and we're going to do one later in the year as well," Rubio added.

96th state level Salt Satyagraha Memorial Day observed at Kuhudi in Puri

PURI: The 96th State-level Salt Satyagraha Memorial Day was observed at the Shaheed Smruti Peeth in Kuhudi under Astarang block of Puri district on Thursday.

The programme was organised jointly by the district administration, the Information and Public Relations Department, and the Utkal Sangrami Smruti Samiti, Kakatpur-Astarang.

Addressing the gathering as chief guest, Behera recalled how the Salt Satyagraha movement at Kuhudi, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's historic Dandi March in 1930, intensified the freedom struggle in the region under the leadership of noted freedom fighters Nilakantha Das, Jagannath Rath and Gobinda Das. He expressed hope that the younger generation would carry forward the legacy and ideals of the freedom



movement.

Speaking on the occasion, Gandhian thinker and writer Das Benhur and Pragatibadi executive editor Birupaksha Tripathy said Gandhi's ideals continue to serve as a foundation of moral values and remain relevant across the world.

The meeting, chaired by Utkal Sangrami Smruti Samiti president Amiya Kumar Pattnaik, was attended by Zilla Parishad vice-chairman

Swadhin Kumar Nayak, Astarang block chairperson Arati Nayak, BDO Sasmita Behera, tehsildar Priyanka Priyadarshini Pati, Jagatsinghpur MP's representative Dibakar Chhatoi, Astarang sarpanch Ramachandra Kandhi, adviser Maheswar Nayak and freedom fighter descendant Shankar Mishra, among others. Speakers highlighted the significance of the freedom struggle, the Salt

Satyagraha and Kuhudi's historical role in the movement.

Messages from the Governor, Chief Minister, former Chief Minister and other dignitaries were read out during the programme. A commemorative souvenir published by the Utkal Sangrami Smruti Samiti was also unveiled.

Four students — Suchismita Sethi, Suraj Pradhan, Pushpajit Pradhan

and Shashank Dalai — who secured the highest marks in the matriculation examination at the block level were felicitated with certificates and financial assistance.

Deputy Director of Information and Public Relations Santosh Kumar Sethi delivered the welcome address, while editor Kalandi Charan Chhatoi conducted the proceedings.

Earlier in the day, guests paid floral tributes to statues and memorial plaques of freedom fighters at Kuhudi and in the block premises. A public awareness padyatra was organised from the block headquarters to Kuhudi. National flag hoisting, tribute ceremonies and cultural programmes were also held at the memorial site. Patriotic songs, including the National Anthem, Vande Mataram and Bande Utkala Janani, were presented during the event.

One drowned in Devi river

Jagatsinghpur : Due to severe heat wave four youth from Macha gaon Asilo village under Balikuda Police station went to Devi River for bath. But due to speed flow of water near Sea base all four youth flow away in river water. Local villagers tried to rescue them by local country boat and successfully rescued three youths. But the fourth one named Sangram Parida missing till now. Local Police, Fire station and local people searching the youth but failed to rescue. Sources



said due to reverse flow of Sea wafe heavy current there in the deep chanel and

rescue operation failed. Other three youth rescued by local people are safe now.

Irregularities in municipal tender process, residents move high court to cancel tender.

Khordha -22/5: Khordha municipal council authority has invited tenders through e-procurement notice no. 1388, dated-24.04.2026 for the repair and construction of roads, drains and construction of new project in 22 wards under the Khordha Municipal Council in various schemes. After the tender notice was revealed in detail, there was intense dissatisfaction among the residents of khordha municipal council and councilors. Tenders worth ? 2 crore 12 lakh were invited for 35 projects in only 14 of the 22 wards. Out of which, 75 percent of the total tender cost has been sanctioned for various projects in Ward No. 4, 11, 12, 15. Ward No. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 18 have been completely excluded from the tender process. Dissatisfaction was expressed in various quarters regarding this. Rajesh Pradhan of Ward No.13 and Badri Narayan



Sahu, a resident of Ward No.18, move the high court vide- W.P.(C) No-14431 of 2026 regarding the widespread irregularities in the tender of khordha municipal council and pray for the cancellation of entire tender process. Both the ward councilors, Kadambini Rout and Bidulata Sahu, met the Collector, Khordha a few days ago and complained about the widespread irregularities and bias in the tender process and also informed the Director of Municipal Administration, Odisha through a letter. The e-Procurement tender notice-1388, dated-24.4.2026

notified online was extended by the municipal council authority without showing any reason. Meanwhile, Rajesh Pradhan of Ward No.13 and Badri Narayan Sahu of Ward No.18 have filed a writ petition in the odisha High Court, seeking cancellation of the tender on the grounds of alleged favouritism, bias and irregularities in tender process. Lawyer of odisha High court on behalf of Badri Narayan Sahoo and Rajesh Pradhan Mr. Achyutananda Pattnaik has issued a pleader notice to the Collector khordha to communicate compliance within 7 days from receipt of the notice.

PEO of Bhanpur GP Suspended

NUAPADA/KHARIAR ROAD, 22/05 : There have been allegations of extortion of money in the name of deceased persons in Bhanpur Gram Panchayat of Nuapada district. In this incident, the District Collector has suspended Bhanpur PEO Kartik Majhi from his duty. There was an irregularity in the payment of widows and old age pension in the said panchayat and the pension money was siphoned off in the name of the deceased persons. Zilla Parishad Member Bhanu Pratap Majhi had written a complaint to the Sub Collector regarding the fact that pension money was being withdrawn in the name of a deceased person for 8 years.

A team led by Sub Collector Surmi Soren had started an investigation.

Based on the investigation report, the District Collector has suspended PEO Kartik Majhi.

It is to be noted that, the pension money of the Panchayat is withdrawn with the signatures of both the Sarpanch and the PEO. The pension money is distributed in the knowledge of the Sarpanch.

How could the Sarpanch not know about this irregularity even after four years? The Sarpanch was also accused of being involved in the pension money assimilation incident, but action has been taken only against the PEO.

Dirty and Foul-Smelling Water Supply in Greater Noida's Beta-2 Sector Sparks Public Anger

Greater Noida: Residents of Sector Beta-2 in Greater Noida are facing serious inconvenience due to the supply of dirty and foul-smelling water in the area. Residents allege that despite repeated complaints to the concerned department of the Greater Noida Authority, the issue remains unresolved. As a result, people are being forced to use contaminated and foul-smelling water for drinking and other household purposes.

Satendra Negi, a resident of I-Block, stated that dirty and foul-smelling water has been supplied in their block for several days, and the water pressure is also extremely low. Despite continuous complaints, no permanent solution has been provided. Other residents of I-Block, including Shivam, Lalit Joshi, Arun, Rajesh, and Vishal, said that the problem has persisted for many days, increasing the risk of serious diseases spreading due to the consumption of contaminated water.

Water Does Not Reach Even the First Floor.

Residents claimed that the water is not suitable even for domestic use, let alone drinking. They also said that the water supply is being provided only for a limited time each day, and even then, the pressure is so low that water does not reach even the first floor of houses. The situation becomes more severe when dirty and foul-smelling water flows through the taps during supply hours.

According to residents, the water supply provided on Thursday afternoon further increased public concern. They said that several complaints have already been lodged with officials of the Greater Noida Authority.

Every time, officials reportedly state that a broken water supply line caused the contamination and low pressure. Although authorities claim that repairs have been completed and the supply will soon normalize, residents say the problem reappears within a day or two. Residents Warn of Protest. Sector residents have

warned that if a permanent solution is not provided soon, they will be forced to stage a protest outside the Authority office. Residents have demanded that the Authority immediately conduct a technical inspection of the water supply lines, carry out laboratory testing of the contaminated water, and ensure regular supply of clean water in the sector.

People say that continued negligence regarding such a basic necessity as drinking water could lead to a major public health crisis. They also warned that if the Authority fails to permanently resolve the issue, they will escalate the matter to the district administration. Meanwhile, Vinod Sharma, Senior Manager of the Water and Sewer Department of the Greater Noida Authority, stated that inspections are being carried out in the blocks from where complaints have been received. He said the issue occurred due to leakage in some pipelines and assured that the problem would be resolved soon.

Book presented to Collector Amrit Raturaj on World Book Day.



Khordha-22/5- Books are the oldest source of knowledge for all of humankind. Be it fiction non-fiction biographies or self-published ones, the range is aplenty. UNESCO's idea behind celebrating this day is to encourage people all over the world to build a habit of reading books, especially the younger lot.

The day is more significant in today's world given that reading books has taken a backseat for many owing to information overload

from other sources. On this occasion Devendra Narayan Barik, Vice-President of the state's leading literary organisation Dasarathpur, Jajpur "Saraswat Shahitya Sanskrutik Parishad" and the editor of its mouthpiece "Bartika" and the book "Sonalira Hasa" written by late Khageswar Barik were presented Collector khordha Amrut Raturaj in his office. Collector Mr. Raturaj expressed his happiness after receiving the two books and thanked to Mr. Barik.

DU women's hostel residents stage midnight protest over 'forced eviction', 'extortion'

New Delhi: Women residents of the University Hostel for Women (UHW) under Delhi University staged a late-night sit-in protest against the facility administration, alleging "forced eviction" and "extortion".

The protest reportedly began around 9:30 pm on Thursday and continued past midnight, with students raising slogans outside the hostel gate and sitting on the streets of the campus amid the ongoing semester examinations.

A large group of women students, residents of the UHW, were heard chanting in a purported video, "Hostel warden bahar aao, bahar aao, bahar aao! Bahar aakar baat karo, baat karo, baat karo!"

In a statement, the All India Students' Association (AISA) alleged that students had been "pushed to the brink" over the past week due to administrative actions, including upsets in basic amenities.

The student organisation claimed that the water supply had been shut off in parts of two hostel blocks, adding that chairs had also been removed from the common reading room, disturbing students' exam preparations.



AISA further alleged that the Provost carried out a "forced eviction drive" despite students paying their hostel fees for June and July in advance.

"This institutional apathy has crossed all limits of human dignity," AISA added.

After a mobilisation on May 16, the student body claimed the Provost had given a "deceptive verbal assurance" to restore facilities and extend the residency deadline. However, the provost later allegedly "backtracked" and issued a "punitive extortion order" demanding Rs450 per day from students who continued to stay in UHW.

AISA listed a series of

demands, including the immediate resignation of the hostel Provost, restoration of round-the-clock water supply, and an unconditional extension of residency without any penalties.

"AISA stands unyieldingly with the resisting residents and demands the immediate resignation of the UHW Provost, a concrete written guarantee for the restoration of 24/7 water supply, and an unconditional extension of the hostel stay without any financial penalties," the statement read. The Delhi University authorities and the UHW administration is yet to issue an official statement in response to these allegations, news agency ANI reported.

Attempt to spread rumours in Noida violence by claiming to be DCP's driver, accused arrested by police

Noida: In connection with the labor violence case in Noida, Phase-2 police station officials arrested the accused private driver, Anil, on Thursday. The Commissionerate Police also refuted false allegations being spread on social media platforms. Police recovered the accused's mobile phone and are continuing interrogation on several other aspects of the case.

According to police officials, attempts were being made on social media to spread rumors against the Commissionerate Police in order to influence the investigation into the Noida violence case. During the

investigation, police successfully arrested Anil Kumar, a resident of Babugarh Cantonment police station area in Hapur, from behind the Motherson company premises.

Accused Is Neither a Government Employee nor a DCP's Driver

Police investigation revealed that accused Anil is neither a government employee nor the driver of any DCP (Deputy Commissioner of Police). Instead, he works as a private driver for an individual employed with an organization in Delhi. Furthermore, he currently has no connection with

Richa Global Company and had worked there only about two years ago.

Police stated that false claims were being circulated on social media alleging that Anil was the driver of a DCP in the Commissionerate. Rumors were also being spread that the police had deliberately added Anil to Richa Company's WhatsApp group. Police clarified that these allegations are completely false and baseless. According to officials, members of certain groups were deliberately spreading such misinformation with the intention of influencing and disrupting the investigation.

Man shot dead to avenge 16-year-old murder; six arrested

Greater Noida: Three men allegedly killed a 25-year-old man in Greater Noida on Wednesday night by firing at him six times from a close range to avenge their father's death 16 years ago, police said on Thursday, adding that six people -- two prime suspects and four others -- were arrested on Thursday and a murder case has been registered. On Thursday morning, the deceased's family put his body on the 130-metre Road for over an hour as a protest, demanding a strict action against the suspects. It briefly affected the traffic. But after senior police officials' intervention, the left the spot. Police identified the deceased as Deepak Nagar, 25, a resident of Vaidpura village in Ecotech-3, Greater Noida, who worked in the fire safety wing of a gas distribution company in Delhi's Ghazipur. "On Wednesday around 9.30 pm, when Nagar was heading for the night shift, three men on

motorbikes waylaid him near his home and fired at him more than six times before fleeing. He suffered bullet injuries to his abdomen and other parts of the body," said a police officer, part of the investigation, requesting anonymity. "A local passerby spotted him lying in a pool of blood close to his bike," he added. Subsequently, Nagar's family was informed and they rushed him to a nearby hospital where doctors declared him brought dead, and police were alerted.

An initial police investigation found three suspects, including two brothers and their uncle, residents of the same Vaidpura village, were the prime suspects who fired at him. "Two suspects, identified as a man in his 30s, and his uncle in his 50s, were arrested after a brief gunfight with police on Thursday from D Park area of Greater Noida. Both sustained bullet injuries to their legs," said Shailendra Singh, deputy commissioner of police (DCP), Central Noida.

Their condition is stable at hospital, said officials. "Investigation found that in 2011 the father of one of the suspects, who is in his 30s, was killed. And Nagar's father was made accused in that case. But after years of trial, he was found innocent in 2025 and released from jail. Since then, the intention to avenge that 2011 killing kept growing among the arrested suspect (in his 30s), his absconding brother and their other family members. They allegedly finally killed Nagar, using illegal weapons on Wednesday," the officer said. Police said Nagar and his family had not reported any previous assault or threat. "Four suspects, who were involved in the planning, were also arrested and efforts are underway to nab the absconding brother," the DCP added. A case under sections 103 (murder) of BNS was registered against three identified and other unidentified suspects at Ecotech-3 police station.

Heat Stress

INDIA is feeling the heat — literally as well as economically. Rising temperatures are taking their toll on livelihoods and labour productivity amid back-to-back fuel price hikes and rocketing inflation. The worst-hit are the poor and informal workers who form the backbone of India's economy. The nationwide battle against heatwaves can no longer be regarded merely as a seasonal public health concern; it is now a full-blown economic challenge. The warnings in recent years have been stark. The International Labour Organisation estimated in 2024 that India lost nearly \$100 billion due to heat-induced productivity losses. The World Bank cautioned in 2022 that around three-fourths of the



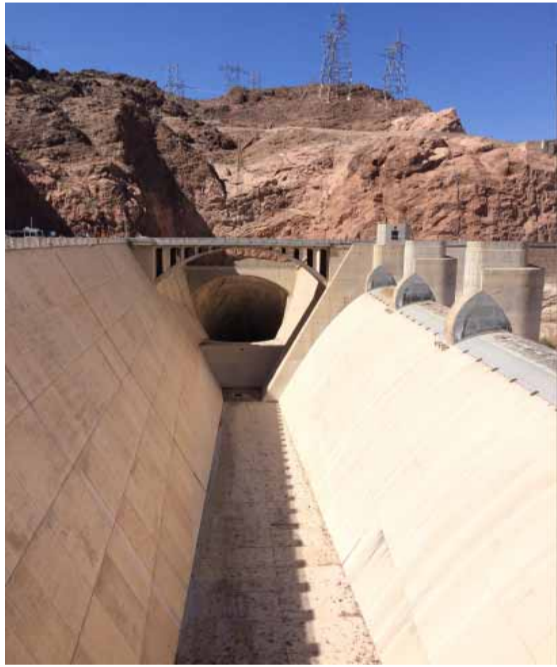
labour force in India worked in heat-exposed sectors, while the country alone may account for nearly half of the world's projected job losses caused by heat stress. The most vulnerable groups include construction workers, farmers and farm labourers, street vendors and delivery agents.

Central and state governments have issued advisories calling for steps such as rescheduled work hours, shaded rest areas, hydration facilities, protective clothing and health monitoring. Yet these measures remain fragmented and insufficient, considering the scale of the crisis. India's current heat action plans are largely temporary relief mechanisms. What the country urgently needs is a comprehensive policy framework that treats safe working conditions in the scorching summer months as an inalienable right.

Earlier this year, the 16th Finance Commission recommended that heatwaves be included in the list of notified disasters under the Disaster Management Act. This classification will enable states and UTs to use money from the State Disaster Response Fund for providing relief and assistance to people. Heatwaves, which inevitably trigger a surge in the demand for electricity and water, need to be tackled with robust, proactive preparedness. The choice before policymakers and other stakeholders is simple: adapt decisively now or pay a far greater human and economic price later.

No Dams

NDIA's Himalayan policy may finally be catching up with geological reality. The Centre's decision to oppose new hydroelectric projects in the upper reaches of the Ganga basin marks a significant departure from the long-held belief



that every river can be engineered into an energy asset. After years of ecological warnings and repeated disasters, the government has acknowledged that the fragile Alaknanda-Bhagirathi region cannot endlessly absorb the burden of aggressive infrastructure expansion. The shadow of the 2013 Kedarnath tragedy still looms large over Uttarakhand. Since then, the Himalayas have witnessed recurring landslides, glacial bursts, tunnel collapses and ground subsidence. Each calamity has reinforced what environmentalists and geologists have long argued: the young Himalayan ecosystem is inherently unstable and highly vulnerable to reckless construction activity. Hydropower may qualify as renewable energy, but in ecologically fragile mountains, it cannot automatically be called sustainable.

The Centre's affidavit before the Supreme Court reflects a welcome recognition that rivers are more than channels of electricity generation. The Ganga, in particular, is an ecological, cultural and spiritual lifeline. Excessive damming disrupts sediment flow, biodiversity and the natural rhythm of the river, while tunnelling and blasting weaken already fragile slopes. The emphasis on maintaining environmental flows is therefore both scientifically sound and environmentally necessary.

This does not mean India can abandon its renewable energy ambitions. But climate goals cannot be pursued through projects that intensify ecological vulnerability and disaster risks. Uttarakhand's development model must move towards safer, decentralised and less intrusive alternatives rather than large-scale interventions that repeatedly test nature's limits. The Centre's shift offers an opportunity to redefine development in the Himalayas—as a commitment to balance energy needs with ecological survival. The mountains have issued enough warnings already.

When Education Loses Integrity: NEET Fiasco

Rabindra Kumar Nayak

The repeated allegations and confirmations of question paper leaks in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) have exposed a serious crisis within India's education system. What was once presented as a transparent and merit-based examination for aspiring medical students is increasingly appearing vulnerable to organised corruption, political patronage, administrative failure, and criminal manipulation. Every year, lakhs of students prepare for NEET with extraordinary discipline, sacrifice, and emotional endurance. Yet each recurring scandal raises the same disturbing question: can merit truly survive in a compromised system?

At the centre of this growing distrust stands the National Testing Agency (NTA), the institution entrusted with conducting some of the country's most important examinations. Established to ensure professionalism, efficiency, and credibility, the agency today faces serious questions regarding competence, accountability, and institutional integrity. Repeated controversies surrounding NEET and other examinations have severely damaged public confidence. While the NTA repeatedly claims that examinations are conducted under strict security protocols, recurring irregularities suggest either alarming administrative weakness or something far more disturbing.

The tragedy lies not merely in the leakage itself, but in the predictable pattern that follows. Public outrage erupts, investigations are announced, selected arrests are made, examinations are rescheduled, and officials promise "strict action." But once the immediate anger subsides, the deeper nexus often remains

A competitive examination on the scale of NEET cannot be manipulated by a handful of isolated individuals alone. The question paper passes through multiple stages—paper setters, moderators, digital systems, printing presses, transportation channels, examination administrators, invigilators, and security personnel. When leaks occur repeatedly, ordinary citizens naturally begin to suspect the involvement of powerful actors. Across India, investigations into examination scams have frequently pointed towards coaching mafias, politically connected middlemen, corrupt officials, and organised criminal syndicates. Such rackets flourish because education has increasingly become commercialised. Medical admission today is not merely an academic aspiration; it has become a multi-crore economy.

untouched. The masterminds rarely face exemplary punishment. The system absorbs the scandal and moves on until the next leak occurs. This cyclical pattern has created a dangerous perception that paper leaks are no longer isolated incidents but an institutionalised racket operating under the protection of influential networks.

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In this context, the NTA cannot escape scrutiny simply through denials or bureaucratic explanations. An institution conducting high-stakes national examinations must be judged not

by official statements but by outcomes. Repeated administrative lapses, technical glitches, grace-mark controversies, and allegations of security breaches indicate deep structural weaknesses. Critics argue that the agency increasingly appears more defensive than accountable.

The social consequences of these failures are devastating. Students from modest rural families study for years under immense financial and emotional pressure. Parents mortgage land, sell jewellery, or exhaust life savings on coaching institutes. Students sacrifice sleep, recreation, and mental peace for a single examination that may determine their future. When such students discover that others may have secured unfair advantage through leaked papers or purchased access, the damage goes beyond disappointment. It destroys faith in justice itself.

The psychological impact is equally alarming. India is already witnessing rising levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and even suicides among competitive exam aspirants. NEET has become not merely an examination but a symbol of existential pressure for lakhs of young people. In such an atmosphere, every paper leak deepens insecurity. Students begin to wonder whether hard work has any value in a corrupted system. A society where youth stop believing in fairness gradually moves towards moral cynicism.

Governments often respond by cancelling examinations or rescheduling selected centres. While such measures may be administratively necessary, they cannot substitute for structural accountability. In many cases, innocent students suffer more than the actual culprits. Aspirants are forced to undergo renewed stress, uncertainty, travel expenses, and psychological exhaustion, while the guilty often remain protected. Justice cannot be reduced to mere rescheduling.

The core problem is the absence of exemplary punishment and institutional transparency. India has witnessed numerous examination scams over the years, yet convictions remain slow and accountability diluted. Frequently, only small intermediaries are arrested while politically influential figures escape scrutiny. Corruption survives not because laws are absent, but because implementation lacks political will.

India urgently needs an independent and technologically advanced examination security mechanism insulated from political influence. Every stage—from question paper preparation to digital encryption, printing, storage, and transportation—must undergo strict real-time monitoring. The functioning of the NTA itself requires independent audit and parliamentary scrutiny. Fast-track courts should handle examination fraud cases, and those found guilty, including officials and politically connected individuals, must face swift and exemplary punishment.

Ultimately, the NEET paper leak issue is not merely about an examination. It is about the ethical foundation of democracy itself. When educational institutions lose integrity, society sends a dangerous message to its youth: manipulation matters more than merit, and power matters more than honesty. India's students do not demand miracles; they demand fairness. If institutions fail to protect that fairness, public trust will continue to erode, and no nation can progress after losing the trust of its youth.

(Former Reader in English)

creativity & Exploring Thoughts



Dr. Arundhati Devi

Creativity allows us to view and solve problems more openly and with innovation. Creativity opens the mind. A society that has lost touch with its creative side is an imprisoned society, in that generations of people may be closed minded. It broadens our perspectives and can help us overcome prejudices. A common misconception is that creativity cannot be cultivated, and that instead some lucky people have an innate sense of

creativity. But this assumption is wrong. According to classical psychology research, there are three main types of creativity: exploratory, transformational, and combinational creativity.

Creativity is exploring thoughts or ideas that are new or different in some way from previous thoughts and ideas. Exploring thoughts and ideas can be expressed by people in many ways. It can be expressed through drawing, writing, singing, or even doing something. Creativity is defined as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others.

Creativity, the ability to make or otherwise bring into existence something new, whether a new solution to a problem, a new method or device, or a new artistic object or form. Creativity is characterised by the ability to perceive

the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions. Creativity involves two processes: thinking, then producing.

Creativity is a phenomenon whereby something new and valuable is formed. The created item may be intangible (such as an idea, a scientific theory, a musical composition, or a joke) or a physical object (such as an invention, a printed literary work, or a painting). Creativity is not heritable and has no unique genetic basis. At most, twin studies suggest that only about 22% of creative performance is related to the genetics we are born with. This is Nature, and it is the minority. The rest, which is the greater majority, is down to our Nurture.

Tips for Creativity are Practice. It may sound obvious, but practice is essential for creativity. Discover Quality in Quantity. Creativity is not about

perfection, Look to the Ordinary, Collaborate With Others, Experiment With Different Styles, Have Confidence, Give Your Brain a Refresh.

The Ways to Improve Your Creative Thinking, Create your own "Three Ifs" Many good innovators take an existing object and ask clever questions to twist the very concept of it and make it new. Practice dreaming, Make time for cohesive creative thinking, Learn to pitch your ideas (in an elevator), Bounce ideas off others.

The Ways to Boost Your Creativity are Step outside. And go for a walk, Step out of your comfort zone, Create psychological distance, Read (widely), Listen to music, Write (or draw), Make a healthy snack, Break your routine.

Director & Secretary, International Indecency Prevention Movement, Odisha, Cuttack, Mob. : 9937172810

Summer : Relaxation, exploration, and learning

Dr. Tapan Kumar Pal

Summer season is a highly anticipated time of the year for many students and children. It is characterized by warm weather, longer days, and a feeling of freedom that often comes with school vacations.

The sun is up high and the mercury is still making its way to the top. There is a stickiness in the air and conversations start and end with complaints. It brings the best and worst out in people. Summer means discovering new ice creams to fall in love with. It means laughter and a heartbreak or two. Summer is for books to discover and worlds to travel to. Summer means mangoes and sticky fingers. Watermelon juice trails and watching the ants. Summer is for complaints and more of



them. Summer meant watching the sky for dark clouds and waiting for big fat pellets of rain. It meant getting wet in the rain and falling sick. I have a love affair with summer. I complain and whine but I do love summer.

My love for summer is probably

a leftover from the school days. Summer meant hanging around in the garden and eating freshly picked guavas in those days. It also meant reading the editorials in The Hindu and writing letters to friends. It is a time to be me and watch life roll by. It was the time to be bored. I wonder if kids these days understand the joy of boredom. I sure didn't understand it then. The grass was green and the trees were no longer barren. The nests were complete and advertisements for swim classes were up. Wildflowers had wilted away and the weeds were winning the battle. It is my season to paint the world red and green and pink and orange with a few dabs of browns and blacks and greys too. Summer of 2016 is going to be a summer of dreams, sweat, glamour and new beginnings. I will share more of my summer as I zip

along. The summer season is an exciting time for students and children, characterized by warm weather, longer days, and the joy of vacations. Occurring between late June and late September, summer offers activities like camping, swimming, and family adventures, promoting personal growth and cherished memories. While it presents opportunities for outdoor fun and delicious summer foods, such as watermelon and grilled corn, awareness regarding sun protection is essential to avoid health issues like sunburn and dehydration. Ultimately, summer is a time for relaxation, exploration, and learning.

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Each Infiltrator Will Be Weeded Out 'One By One': HM Amit Shah

New Delhi, 22/5: Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday that the government has resolved not only to stop infiltration but also identify every single illegal person "one by one" and push them out of the country. Delivering the K.F. Rustomji Lecture organised in memory of the founder and first Border Guard of BSF, HM Shah said the government would not allow any artificial alteration of demography and promised to hold a meeting with Chief Ministers of Tripura, Assam and West Bengal to strengthen the security grid in border states.

Calling the attempt to alter demography a "conspiracy", HM Shah said, "The BSF has to foil this conspiracy. And today, I can declare that in Tripura, Assam and West Bengal there are governments which support the principle that there should be no infiltration." He

said the BSF should not only guard the border but also build communication bridges with village patwari and police station, district collector and district superintendent of police to detect infiltrators, infiltration routes and cattle smuggling routes and plug them. "It is BSF's responsibility to identify and stop these activities," he said. The Home Minister said that very soon, a meeting of the Chief Ministers of these three border states will be convened in the Ministry to further strengthen the fight against infiltrators. "The time has come that infiltration should also be put to an end," he said, citing the successful example of the eradication of Maoism. "When we decided to eliminate Maoism, many officials warned us not to go ahead. But our brave jawans achieved the difficult task. Similarly, I am confident our



jawans will also eliminate infiltration from its roots," he said, adding that a security problem needs to be struck at its roots rather than being ignored and allowed to exist for years. He said to check infiltration, the Union government has increased the BSF's jurisdiction from 15 km up to 50 km from the border to arrest

and conduct searches, and West Bengal has also started handing over land to the force for border fencing. The event also featured the Border Security Force (BSF) Investiture Ceremony in which 43 BSF personnel were given awards. On an earlier occasion, HM Shah had said that the journey of the BSF from 1965 to 2025

demonstrates how an organisation that began with limited resources in challenging circumstances has emerged as the world's largest and most prestigious border security force. He said that BSF is the finest example of how patriotism can overcome all difficulties to achieve global excellence. He had highlighted that the patriotism and dedication shown by BSF personnel in adverse conditions — be it temperatures above 45 degrees or extremely low, dense jungles, rugged mountains, or coastal areas — have earned the BSF the honour of being the first line of defence. HM Shah added that a decision was made in the country to assign one force to secure each border, and based on the BSF's capability, it was entrusted with the responsibility of securing two of the most challenging borders, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Quad Foreign Ministers To Meet In New Delhi On May 26

New Delhi, 22/5: At the invitation of External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, the Foreign Minister of Australia Penny Wong, the Foreign Minister of Japan Toshimitsu Motegi, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will undertake an official visit to New Delhi to participate in the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting on May 26. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the visit reflects continued high-level engagement among Quad partners and reinforces their shared vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. The official statement said, "In keeping with the Quad vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, the Ministers will build on discussions held in Washington, DC on 1 July 2025. They will exchange views on advancing Quad cooperation across priority areas, review progress on ongoing Quad initiatives, and reflect on recent developments in the Indo-Pacific region and other international issues of mutual concern." The meeting is expected to focus on key areas of cooperation, including maritime security, resilient supply chains, infrastructure development, critical and emerging technologies, climate action, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The discussions will also review ongoing Quad initiatives aimed at strengthening regional stability and economic growth. During their visit, the Foreign Ministers of Australia and Japan, along with the US Secretary of State, are also expected to hold bilateral meetings with EAM Jaishankar. They are further scheduled to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi during their stay in the national Capital. The Quad meeting comes at a time when Indo-Pacific geopolitical dynamics continue to evolve, with member countries seeking to deepen cooperation and coordination on shared regional and global challenges. Meanwhile, ahead of his visit to India, Rubio said Washington wants to expand energy ties with New Delhi and deepen coordination through the Quad, while describing India as a "great ally" and "great partner" amid global supply disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz.

DRI seizes 60,000 kg smuggled areca nuts in North-East

New Delhi, 22/5: The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized around 60,000 kg of smuggled foreign-origin areca nuts in two major operations conducted in the North-East region, Ministry of Finance said on Friday. The seizures were made by the Guwahati Zonal Unit of DRI during operations carried out yesterday and earlier this week in Mizoram and Assam following specific intelligence inputs.

According to the ministry, initial investigations revealed that the foreign-origin dried areca nuts were smuggled into India from Myanmar through the Myanmar-Mizoram border. In one of the operations, the DRI was assisted by the 38 Battalion of the Assam Rifles. So far, five persons have been arrested in connection with the smuggling activities. The ministry said the illegal influx of areca nuts from neighbouring countries is causing economic damage to domestic areca nut growers and undermining economic security in border regions. The operations are part of continued efforts by enforcement agencies to curb cross-border



smuggling networks operating in the North-East region. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance on Thursday said the DRI had also seized around 3,00,000 electronic cigarettes and vapes worth Rs 120 crore in a nationwide crackdown on an e-cigarette smuggling racket operating across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi and West Bengal. According to the ministry, the anti-smuggling agency carried out enforcement operations at multiple ports, airports and Inland Container Depots (ICDs) over the last

few days to intercept illegal imports of prohibited nicotine products. The Ministry of Finance said, "Acting on specific intelligence, DRI identified, tracked and intercepted multiple suspicious import consignments that were mis-declared to evade customs scrutiny." It added that, "Detailed examination led to the seizure of nearly 3,00,000 electronic cigarettes/vapes of various brands, flavours and specifications valued at more than Rs 120 crore."

19th Rozgar Mela: PM Modi To Distribute 51,000 Appointment Letters Today

New Delhi, 22/5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will distribute more than 51,000 appointment letters to newly-appointed youth in various government departments and organisations at the 19th Rozgar Mela on Saturday, said an official. The letters will be distributed via video-conferencing, and PM Modi will also address the gathering on the occasion. In keeping with the Prime Minister's commitment to prioritising employment generation, the Rozgar Mela is a major initiative aimed at translating this vision into reality. Since its inception, around 12 lakh recruitment letters have been issued through 18 Rozgar Melas organised across the country. The 19th Rozgar Mela will be held at 47 locations across the country. The newly recruited candidates, selected from all parts of India, will be joining various Ministries and



Departments of the Government of India, including the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Financial Services, Department of Higher Education, among others. During the 18th Rozgar Mela held in January, PM Modi emphasised that connecting youth with skills and providing them employment and self-employment opportunities have been the

priority of the government. The Prime Minister had said that the Rozgar Mela was launched to bring government recruitments into mission mode, and over the years, it has become an institution. Through this initiative, lakhs of young people have received appointment letters in various government departments. "India today is among the youngest nations in the world, and the government

is consistently striving to create new opportunities for the youth both domestically and globally," the Prime Minister had said. He had noted that the government was entering into trade and mobility agreements with numerous countries, which were opening countless new opportunities for young Indians. PM Modi had pointed out that in recent times, India has made unprecedented investments in modern infrastructure, leading to increased employment across construction-related sectors. He observed that India's startup ecosystem is expanding rapidly, with nearly two lakh registered startups employing over 21 lakh youth. He remarked that Digital India has expanded a new economy, with India emerging as a global hub in animation, digital media, and several other sectors.

ITBP's all-women expedition successfully summits Mt Everest

New Delhi, 22/5: The Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBP) has completed its first-ever All-Women International Mountaineering Expedition to Mt Everest (8,848 m), marking a historic milestone in the Force's mountaineering legacy. The 14-member team, comprising 11 women climbers and three technical and support members, successfully summited Mt. Everest on May 21 with the first summit at 06:52 am via the South Col route from the Nepal side, the ITBP said in a statement. In a post on X, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police hailed the successful Mount Everest summit, describing the achievement as a proud moment for India. "History was made on Mount Everest. #ITBP's first-ever All-Women Expedition summited Mount Everest (8,848 m) via the South Col Route on 21 May 2026. With the first summit at 0652 hrs, all 11 women climbers reached the top. Proud moment for India," said ITBP. The expedition was flagged off from the ITBP headquarters on April 19. As per the ITBP, the climbers displayed exceptional courage, endurance and teamwork while negotiating extreme weather conditions, low oxygen levels and difficult ice-wall sections in the "Death Zone" above 8,000 metres. "The expedition reflects ITBP's commitment towards women empowerment, adventure leadership and excellence in high-altitude operations."

Ebola Alert: Surveillance, Health Screening Measures Intensified At Kochi Airport

New Delhi, 22/5: Health authorities have intensified surveillance and precautionary measures against the Ebola virus at Cochin International Airport, in Kerala's Kochi, following an emergency preparedness meeting jointly convened by Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) and the Airport Health Organisation (APHO). The move comes amid heightened global concern over Ebola outbreaks in parts of Africa and aims to strengthen early detection and public health response systems at the airport. According to the official media release issued on Friday, "Health surveillance and precautionary protocols against the Ebola virus have been intensified at Kochi airport." The release further stated that the meeting decided to strengthen passenger monitoring systems and reinforce coordinated public health response measures to prevent the possible spread of infection. As part of the enhanced surveillance mechanism, airport authorities have



activated a 24x7 monitoring system for international passengers. Thermal screening, verification of 21-day travel history and mandatory submission of self-declaration forms have also been introduced for passengers arriving from abroad. Officials said special monitoring would be carried out for travellers arriving from countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and South Sudan, where concerns related to Ebola outbreaks remain

significant. The preparedness meeting was attended by CIAL Airport Director Manu G, Airport Health Officer Dr Raphael Teddy, Senior Medical Officer Dr Aysha Manika K.A., along with representatives from CISF, immigration authorities, airlines, the Airports Authority and CIAL officials. APHO Public Health Specialist Dr Anna presented a detailed preparedness and response plan focusing on Ebola prevention, case identification and infection

control protocols. Officials noted that among the five reported species of the Ebola virus, there is currently "no approved vaccine or specific treatment for the Bundibugyo Ebola Virus (BDBV) variant." They also highlighted that the disease can spread from animals to humans as well as through direct contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals. Health authorities stated that the incubation period of the disease ranges from two to 21 days, while fever, sore throat, headache and flu-like symptoms are among the early warning signs. The mortality rate, officials said, ranges between 30 and 50 per cent. To strengthen emergency preparedness, isolation wards have been arranged at Emakulam General Hospital, Government Hospital Kalamassery and District Hospital Aluva. Authorities also stressed strict adherence to infection prevention measures, including wearing three-layer masks and maintaining proper hand hygiene through regular handwashing with soap.

Cyprus President Christodoulides Calls For Stronger EU-India Relations Amid Rising Global Uncertainty

New Delhi, 22/5: Emphasising the need for deeper engagement between the European Union (EU) and India amid rising geopolitical uncertainty, Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides on Friday said that the partnership is evolving beyond trade and economics into a wider strategic relationship. Addressing a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, following their bilateral talks in New Delhi, Christodoulides said, "I referenced at the outset, in these times of growing geopolitical uncertainty, I firmly believe that the partnership between the European Union and India must become even stronger because this relationship is no longer driven only by economics. It is evolving at a fast pace into a broader comprehensive strategic partnership grounded in shared interests, shared responsibilities, and a common commitment to stability, resilience, and prosperity." "Indeed, Europe and India have every reason to deepen their cooperation further on security, trade, technology, innovation and connectivity," he added. Highlighting the longstanding connection between the two countries, the Cypriot President said Cyprus-India relations are founded on shared values and historical experiences, with ties between the people from both sides going back centuries. "They were forged through common struggles for, for freedom and the right of peoples to self-determination. And those relations are consistently strengthened through our shared commitment to peace, democracy, and respect for international law. And today, in an increasingly fragmented world, this partnership must be seen in a new light because Cyprus and India are once again called upon to work together and address the challenges of a changing world," he stated. Christodoulides further said that strengthening the EU-India partnership remains a core priority during Cyprus's Presidency of the EU. "The European Union-India partnership is an integral part of the vision of the Cyprus Presidency for a union that is more open to the world."

Delhi HC Grants Interim Bail To Umar Khalid From June 1-3 To Visit Ailing Mother

New Delhi, 22/5: The Delhi High Court on Friday granted three days' interim bail to jailed student activist Umar Khalid in connection with the larger conspiracy case linked to the 2020 Delhi riots, to enable him to spend time with his ailing mother, who

is scheduled to undergo surgery next month. A Division Bench of Justices Prathiba M. Singh and Madhu Jain allowed Khalid interim bail from June 1 to June 3 after taking an "empathetic view" of the matter. "Interim bail is granted for 3 days from 1-3 June,

in order to enable the appellant to spend time with his mother," the Delhi High Court said. Khalid had moved the Delhi High Court challenging a trial court order denying him interim bail on humanitarian grounds to attend the Chehlum ceremony of his

late uncle and to take care of his mother. The Justice Singh-led Bench directed that Khalid would remain within the Delhi-NCR region during the period of interim bail and stay at the address furnished before the Delhi High Court. It further

ordered that he would not visit any place other than the hospital and his place of stay. The Delhi High Court directed Khalid to use only one mobile number and remain in continuous touch with the Investigating Officer during the

period of interim bail. During the hearing, Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, appearing for the Delhi Police, opposed the plea and submitted that Khalid's mother was required to undergo only a minor surgery and that his sisters could take care of her.

Italy Backs Ukraine's Full EU Membership Through Normal Accession Process

Stockholm,22/5: Italy's support for Ukraine's full European Union membership is unwavering, but work must be done with Ukraine to "lay the groundwork" allowing the country to complete the bloc's rigorous accession process, especially in the area of combatting corruption, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said on Friday. "We are in favour of Ukraine joining the EU as a full member, but we must lay the groundwork to achieve this goal," Tajani told reporters on the sidelines of a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Helsingborg, Sweden. "The ultimate goal is to see Ukraine enter the EU as a full member, alongside Western Balkan countries. This aspect is of crucial importance to us (Italy)," he continued. "Certain rules must be respected," said Tajani, adding that he had discussed Italy's potential role in combating graft with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during a recent visit to Ukraine, Adnkronos news agency



reported. Italy was prepared to deploy officers from its tax police, which have extensive experience in the fight against corruption and are already in contact with Ukraine's economy and finance ministry, Tajani noted. "We are looking at how we can help combat corruption and thus help Ukraine comply with all the EU accession criteria. This is a concrete contribution," Tajani underlined. Tajani's comments came after

Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz, in a letter to EU leaders on Thursday, pitched the idea of "associate membership" of the EU for Ukraine, which would allow Ukrainian officials to take part in EU summits and ministerial meetings but not vote in them. Such a move could help Zelensky sell Ukrainians a peace deal to end the more-than-four-year-old Russian invasion, Merz argued. Merz also suggested the EU make a

"political commitment" to apply the bloc's mutual assistance clause to Ukraine, arguing this would provide "a substantial security guarantee" should Ukraine not regain all of its territory or join NATO – outcomes that are both widely expected. EU candidate countries must align with the bloc's norms in 35 policy areas, or 'chapters' – from justice standards and corruption to farm and fishing rules: a process that can take many years. All 27 EU members must agree before each chapter of negotiations can be opened and closed. Ukraine applied for EU membership in February 2022 after Russia's invasion and began entry negotiations in June 2024. European officials say Ukraine's full membership of the bloc in the next few years is unrealistic. However, a 2027 entry date was pencilled into a 20-point peace proposal discussed by Zelensky and US President Donald Trump in late December.

South Korea Plans To Acquire US SM-6 Missile Interceptors By 2034

Seoul,22/5: South Korea on Friday finalised a plan to acquire US Standard Missile-6 (SM-6) shipborne missile interceptors by 2034, in a bid to boost its missile defence capabilities, the state arms procurement agency said. The Defence Project Promotion Committee, a decision-making body for arms procurement under the Defence Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA), approved the 530 billion-won (USD 351.5 million) project to acquire the SM-6 long-range ship-to-air missile interceptors and related equipment, the agency said. An SM-6 interceptor is an advanced defence missile interceptor for warships that can track and destroy a wide range of incoming threats, Yonhap news agency reported. It has a maximum range of 460 kilometres, with an altitude of up to 36 km, and is built to directly track targets with its own radar, allowing ships to deal with multiple threats at the same time. The military plans to equip the 8,200-ton Aegis destroyer ROKS Dasan Jeong



Yakyong, which is scheduled to enter service later this year, as well as the ROKS Daeho Kim Jong Seo, another vessel of the same class, with the SM-6 interceptors. The SM-6 interceptors will also be installed on the already-deployed ROKS Jeongjo the Great through future capability upgrades. "The project is expected to enhance ship-to-air defence capabilities of Aegis destroyers against enemy anti-ship ballistic missiles, aircraft and cruise missiles, as well as improve their anti-ballistic missile defence," the DAPA said. In November 2023, the United

States approved a USD 650 million sale of up to 38 SM-6 missiles and related equipment to South Korea through the government-to-government Foreign Military Sales program. Friday's announcement by DAPA suggests that the acquisition may have been scaled back from the earlier plan. The timeline for the acquisition has also been revised to 2023-34, from the original 2023-31 schedule. The committee also approved a research and development (R&D) plan for a new military communications satellite system to replace older satellite and ground equipment.

Central African Republic Forms New Government

Bangui,22/5: President of the Central African Republic, Faustin-Archange Touadera, on Thursday signed a decree to form a new government. According to the decree, four ministers of state, 26 ministers and two minister delegates were appointed or retained at the Prime Minister's proposal. Arnaud Djoubaye Abazene was retained as minister of state for justice, human rights promotion and good governance, and keeper of the seals. Aurelien Simplicie Zingas was also retained as minister of state for national education. Several other government members also kept their posts, including Minister of Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad Sylvie Baipo Temon, and Minister of Finance and Budget Herve Ndobu. Former Minister of Energy Development and Hydraulic Resources Arthur Bertrand Piri was appointed Minister of State for Equipment and Public Works. Evariste



Ngamana, spokesperson for the ruling party United Hearts Movement, was named minister of state for communication and media and government spokesperson. Xinhua news agency reported. Local media reported that the new government has been tasked with enhancing development and reinforcing peace efforts in the war-torn country. The decree came six days after Felix Moloua was reappointed as Prime Minister. The reappointment came more than a month after President

Faustin-Archange Touadera's swearing-in and inauguration for a new seven-year term following the December 28, 2025, presidential election, which he won with 77.9 per cent of the vote. Earlier in May, Moloua had submitted his resignation to Touadera in line with post-election tradition, and the president accepted it. Following his reappointment, Moloua became the first head of government under the country's "Seventh Republic."

UN Special Rapporteur Reiterates Call For Probe Into Pakistani Strike On Kabul Hospital

Kabul,22/5: The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, on Friday, reiterated his call for a full and independent investigation into Pakistan's airstrike on Omid Rehabilitation Hospital in Kabul that took place in March and resulted in the killing of more than 269 people. Bennett's call for investigation comes in response to United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's (UNAMA) statement on X, where it shared details about cross-border casualties in Afghanistan. On March 16, Pakistan launched airstrikes on Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul that killed hundreds of civilians and injured several others. In a post on X, Bennett stated, "The 16/3 attack by Pakistan at Omid Drug Rehab Hospital Kabul where UNAMA verified 269-plus civilians killed demands a full, independent investigation. Deliberate attacks



on civilians or civ objects may amount to war crimes. I also urge Taliban to ensure safety of patients in such facilities." On May 12, the UNAMA stated that at least 372 Afghan civilians have been killed and 397 injured between January 1 and March 31 this year due to cross-border violence between the Pakistani military and Afghan forces. The Human Rights Service of the UNAMA documented over 750

civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan because of cross-border armed violence between Afghanistan's "de facto" security forces and Pakistani military. Most of these civilian casualties occurred as a result of airstrikes in February and March, the report noted. According to the report, most of these civilian casualties occurred after Pakistan announced the start of Operation Ghazab lil-Haq on February 26,

with over half attributed to the March 16 airstrikes by Pakistani military forces impacting the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Hospital in Kabul. "Among the total civilian casualties were 72 women, 554 men, 48 girls and 95 boys. Up until the March 16 airstrike on the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Centre, women and children made up over half of civilian casualties recorded, however as the Omid Hospital housed only males, this breakdown changed after the incident," the UNAMA update on Cross-border civilian casualties (January-March 2026) in Afghanistan stated. Airstrikes caused 64 per cent of the civilian casualties while cross-border firing like mortars and artillery caused 34 per cent of the casualties, the report noted. On March 16, airstrikes by Pakistani military forces impacted the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Hospital, a facility for the treatment of drug-affected individuals.

India-Cyprus 'Strong And Futuristic Partnership' Rooted In Shared Values: PM Modi

New Delhi,22/5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday hailed the "strong and futuristic partnership" between India and Cyprus, which he said remains rooted in shared values. "Happy to have met President Nikos Christodoulides in Delhi. We held extensive deliberations on further strengthening the India-Cyprus friendship. Considering the close ties between our nations, we have decided to elevate our friendship into a Strategic Partnership," PM Modi wrote on X after meeting Christodoulides at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi. "Ours is indeed a strong and futuristic partnership rooted in shared values. The growing investment linkages between our nations are a matter of immense joy, and we hope to increase trade and economic ties in the times to come," he added. Both leaders held extensive discussions on India-Cyprus bilateral ties. "The visit of President Nikos Christodoulides to India will greatly benefit the people of India and Cyprus. At the same time, it will contribute to a prosperous and sustainable planet as well!" PM Modi stated in another post Friday evening. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the meeting outcomes include



elevation of ties to a strategic partnership, besides signing of several agreements – including on a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism, diplomatic training between Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) and the Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cyprus and also in the field of higher education and research. Before the meeting, President Christodoulides shared a light moment with PM Modi as both posed for a selfie at the Hyderabad House. "Prime Minister Modi, my good friend Narendra, I wish to express my

deepest appreciation to you personally, and to the people of India, for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to me and my delegation," Christodoulides wrote on X, sharing the selfie. "I feel exceptionally honoured and privileged to be in Delhi for this State Visit, almost a year since your historic visit to Cyprus," he added. Earlier in the day, President Christodoulides paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat. External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar also called on President Christodoulides and expressed appreciation for his positive sentiments and guidance

for the bilateral ties and cooperation between India and the European Union. Following the meeting, EAM Jaishankar posted on X, "Delighted to call on President Christodoulides of the Republic of Cyprus in New Delhi today. Value his positive sentiments and guidance for strengthening our bilateral ties and India – EU cooperation." The Cyprus President arrived in the national capital on Thursday from Mumbai and was received at the airport by Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways Ajay Tamta.

'Pakistan's Gas Sector On Brink Of Collapse'

New Delhi,22/5: Pakistan's gas sector has gone into a structural decline, which, in turn, is damaging industrial competitiveness, discouraging exploration investment, increasing LNG dependence and weakening Pakistan's long-term energy security, according to an article in the local media. Policymakers have been treating the gas crisis as a supply shortage problem, but the rot runs deeper, as it is the structure of the gas market itself that no longer works, the article in Karachi's Business Recorder pointed out. Pakistan now faces declining indigenous gas production, expensive RLNG imports, shrinking industrial throughput, and severe financial stress across the energy chain. Yet the institutional structure has barely changed. The most dangerous consequence is declining throughput. Industrial consumers are steadily reducing dependence on pipeline gas because tariffs have become unaffordable and unpredictable. Businesses are shifting toward solar, coal, biomass, furnace oil and self-generation because pipeline gas is no longer viewed as commercially reliable. This destruction of demand has been accelerated by misguided policy, the article said. The wrongly calculated and irrational levy imposed on captive power plants effectively priced many industrial users out of the gas system.



Instead of preserving industrial throughput and export competitiveness, policy moved aggressively to force industry away from gas consumption. The result was predictable: industrial consumers reduced off-take, switched fuels or invested in alternatives altogether. This has inflicted severe damage on the economics of the pipeline system, the article said. Pakistan's gas infrastructure carries enormous fixed costs. Pipelines, compressor stations, maintenance, debt servicing and staffing costs do not disappear simply because fewer molecules move through the network. Instead, these costs are spread over smaller and smaller gas volumes. The result is a classic utility death spiral: lower throughput leads to higher tariffs, higher tariffs reduce demand further, and declining demand pushes tariffs even higher. The core problem is that the fixed costs of the system are being recovered

from a shrinking and increasingly stressed customer base. As throughput falls, the Sui companies continue attempting to recover infrastructure costs, UFG losses, financing costs, RLNG obligations and historical shortfalls through a shrinking customer base. Consumers increasingly face the absurd situation where service quality weakens, industrial competitiveness deteriorates, and supply reliability becomes uncertain, yet tariffs continue rising. The diversion of imported LNG away from industry toward the domestic sector has further worsened the crisis. Pakistan originally imported LNG primarily to support industrial growth, efficient power generation and economic expansion. Instead, increasingly large volumes are being diverted toward low-paying and heavily subsidised domestic consumption. The financial consequences are enormous, the article observed.

Rupee Gains For 2nd Straight Session, Closes 63 Paise Higher At 95.73 Against Dollar

New Delhi, 22/5: The Indian rupee extended its recovery for a second consecutive trading session on Friday, appreciating 63 paise to close provisionally at 95.73 against the US dollar. The domestic currency drew support from easing crude oil prices, positive sentiment in local equity markets and expectations of intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to curb excessive volatility. The rupee opened at 96.30 per dollar in the interbank foreign exchange market and witnessed sharp gains during the day. It touched an intra-day high of 95.30 and a low of 95.68 before settling at 95.73. The latest rise comes after the currency had rebounded 50 paise on Thursday from its record closing low to end at 96.36 against the greenback. "This recovery is largely attributed to the Reserve Bank of India's active intervention following its USD/INR buy-sell swap announcement, along with easing geopolitical tensions that have softened imported commodity prices," an analyst stated. Forex market participants said investor sentiment improved



after comments from US Secretary of State Marco Rubio suggested that diplomatic efforts related to the Iran situation were progressing in a constructive manner. The remarks helped ease concerns over potential disruptions in global energy markets, offering relief to emerging-market currencies, including the rupee. The domestic

unit also benefited from a decline in US Treasury yields and strength in Indian equities. Benchmark stock indices ended the session in positive territory, with the Sensex rising 231.99 points to close at 75,415.35 and the Nifty advancing 64.60 points to settle at 23,719.30. Market analysts, however, cautioned that

geopolitical developments remain a key risk for the currency. "For now, the near-term trend has turned supportive for the rupee, with RBI intervention continuing to play a key role in controlling volatility and restoring confidence in the forex market," an analyst stated. "Rupee range is expected between 95.00-95.90 in the near term," an analyst added.

India Better Placed Among Top 10 Economies In Managing Retail Inflation: Assocham

New Delhi, 22/5: India is better placed to manage retail inflation among the top 10 economies, according to an analysis by leading industry chamber Assocham on Friday, suggesting the RBI to maintain the repo rate status quo while introducing liquidity, interest subvention and moratorium support measures. India's inflation stood at 3.2 per cent in February 2026 and rose to 3.5 per cent in April, a 0.3 percentage-point increase. This performance is better than the significant increase in the US, where inflation rose from 2.4 per cent in February to 3.8 per cent in April, a 1.4 percentage-point increase. India also performed significantly better than the inflation trajectory of France, Italy and Germany, where inflation increased by more than

1 percentage point in their respective inflation numbers between February and April. India is also better placed than Brazil in managing inflation. "As India's headline inflation still prevails in the benign conditions, we suggest RBI to maintain a status quo on repo rate in the forthcoming review of RBI monetary policy in the 1st week of June 2026," said Nirmal K Minda, President, Assocham. Though some increase in headline inflation can't be ruled out, given the recent rise in energy prices, "it will be a transitory phase in the inflation trajectory, and we are hopeful that inflation will return to benign territory", Minda noted. Assocham appreciated the Central Bank's decision to conduct a \$5 billion USD/INR buy-sell swap auction on May 26, to inject

long-term liquidity into the banking system and strengthen forex reserves. "This will help manage rupee volatility amid global pressures and recent currency depreciation driven by geopolitical tensions and oil price shocks," said Minda. The industry body proposed an 'On-Tap LTRO' scheme to provide Rs 1 lakh crore in liquidity support at the Repo Rate to banks and NBFCs for lending to export-oriented and energy-related MSMEs. It will primarily support working capital loans of up to Rs 10 crore, thereby ensuring easier access to credit and business continuity. Assocham also proposed an interest subvention to reduce borrowing costs for MSMEs reliant on exports to the MENA and EU regions.

New Delhi, 22/5: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has reportedly introduced a 'one-day-a-week work-from-home option' for its junior employees a fortnight after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for remote work to conserve energy. The market regulator is also considering postponing internal events to cut non-essential travel and hotel costs as part of its effort to tackle the inflationary fallout of the US-Iran war, a report from NDTV Profit said citing sources. The move comes after HDFC Bank allowed two days of remote work for select staff handling treasury operations, credit underwriting, risk, transaction banking, digital banking and IT services, the report said. Similarly, HDFC Securities had also shifted to a hybrid model following PM

India's Economy Showed Resilience In April Despite West Asia Crisis: RBI Bulletin

New Delhi, 22/5: India's economic activity exhibited resilience in April, with industrial and services sectors maintaining strength across several segments even as the global economy continued to be shadowed by uncertainties in West Asia, according to the RBI's monthly bulletin released on Friday. Industrial and services activity stayed strong in many segments. Early results of listed private non-financial companies for Q4:2025-26 also showed an improvement in business performance over the previous quarter, with aggregate sales and operating profit recording a double-digit growth, the bulletin stated. It highlighted that in the agriculture sector, rapid progress of summer sowing was supported by above normal pre-monsoon rainfall and sufficient reservoir storage levels. However, a higher probability of above-normal minimum temperatures and unseasonal rains in some parts of the country could pose risks to the harvesting of remaining rabi crops. The current public foodgrain stocks remain well above the buffer norms ensuring domestic food security. In March, net foreign direct investment remained



positive for the second consecutive month. Foreign portfolio investors continued to remain net sellers in April and May, though the pace of outflows moderated, the bulletin observed. CPI inflation rose to 3.5 per cent in April, driven mainly by food inflation, while core inflation remained steady indicating limited pass-through of higher input cost conditions. Although headline inflation remains firmly within the tolerance band, the pass through to domestic prices needs to be monitored, it pointed out. The RBI bulletin also stated that the conflict in West Asia continued to exert pressure on commodity markets, global trade flows and supply chains,

contributing to the volatility in financial markets. India has entered this phase from a position of macroeconomic strength. Domestic demand continues to be the key driver of growth. However, the near-term outlook is somewhat clouded by supply side pressures. The financial conditions, crude oil prices and capital flows continue to pose challenges to the external sector outlook. Nevertheless, robust services exports, positive net FDI flows, foreign exchange reserves buffers and a number of proactive policy measures undertaken by the Government and the Reserve Bank are likely to cushion the Indian economy against external headwinds.

Piyush Goyal, Sonowal Hold Meet To Facilitate Foreign Trade

New Delhi, 22/5: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday co-chaired a meeting with Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterway, Sarbananda Sonowal, to directly engage with India's exporters, importers and port authorities to facilitate the smoother flow of trade amid the disruption in ship movement and uncertainties in global markets due to the Middle East conflict. "We are committed to ensuring coordinated, time-bound measures to address concerns and create opportunities to make Indian traders more competitive globally with a 'Whole of the Government' approach," Goyal said. "Our government has relentlessly worked to build a seamless, efficient, responsive and future-ready trade ecosystem to advance ease of doing business," the minister added. Meanwhile, India's



total exports of goods and services during April this year have recorded a 13.59 per cent growth to \$80.80 billion, compared to the corresponding figure of \$71.13 billion during April 2025, despite the uncertainties in global markets, according to figures compiled by the Commerce Ministry. Merchandise exports during the month were \$43.56

billion, as compared to \$38.28 billion during April 2025, registering a robust growth of 13.78 per cent. Non-petroleum exports during April were valued at \$33.97 billion which represents an increase of 9.01 per cent compared to the corresponding figure of \$31.16 billion during April 2025. Major drivers of merchandise exports growth during the month include

petroleum products, electronic goods, engineering goods, drugs and pharmaceuticals, meat, dairy and poultry products. The export of petroleum products increased by 34.66 per cent from \$7.12 billion in April 2025 to \$9.59 billion in April this year. Similarly, electronic goods exports increased by an impressive 40.31 per cent during the month to \$5.18 billion from \$3.69 billion in April last year. Engineering goods exports increased by 8.76 per cent to \$10.35 billion in April this year from \$9.52 billion in the same month of the previous year. Meat, dairy and poultry products exports also recorded a robust jump of 48.03 per cent to \$0.55 billion during the month while drugs and pharmaceuticals exports increased by 7.12 per cent to \$2.66 billion in April.

PM Modi's Tourism Push Seen Boosting Forex, Hotel Investment: HAI

Thiruvananthapuram, 22/5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call urging Indians to increasingly choose destinations within the country for leisure travel, conferences, weddings and events has opened up a major economic opportunity for India's tourism and hospitality sectors, according to the Hotel Association of India (HAI). The industry body said the Prime Minister's push for domestic tourism comes at a crucial time when geopolitical instability, slowing global growth and changing travel patterns are reshaping the international tourism market. India, it said, is well positioned to emerge as one of the world's preferred destinations for leisure, business, medical and spiritual tourism while also strengthening its foreign exchange reserves through higher inbound travel. According to the

HAI, the initiative goes beyond encouraging Indians to holiday within the country. It could trigger major investments in hotels, resorts, convention centres, wellness retreats and tourism infrastructure, generating employment and economic activity across urban and rural India. "Inbound tourism will play a decisive role in the growth of India's hospitality sector in the coming years," said K.B. Kachru, President of the Hotel Association of India and Chairman-South Asia of Radisson Hotel Group. "India has the opportunity to position itself as a globally competitive tourism destination with world-class infrastructure and experiences," he added. The HAI noted that India's image as a stable democracy with cultural diversity and improving

infrastructure is increasingly appealing to international travellers seeking safe and experience-driven destinations amid global uncertainty. It said stronger inbound tourism could substantially raise India's foreign exchange earnings through spending on hotels, food and beverages, healthcare, transport, retail and entertainment. The industry body estimated that sustained tourism growth could increase tourism-linked foreign exchange earnings by 25 to 30 per cent over the coming years. The association also expects rising domestic tourism demand to accelerate investment in mid-market, premium and luxury hotels, cruises, heritage destinations, religious tourism circuits and MICE infrastructure.

RBI Declares Record Dividend Of Rs 2.87 Lakh Crore To Centre For FY26

New Delhi, 22/5: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday declared a record dividend of around Rs 2.87 lakh crore to Centre for FY26, that would help the government address challenges arising from the ongoing West Asia crisis. The RBI's balance sheet expanded by 20.61 per cent to Rs 91.97 lakh

crore at the end of March 31, 2026. The decision was taken at the 623rd meeting of the Central Board of Directors of Reserve Bank of India in Mumbai under the Chairmanship of Governor Sanjay Malhotra. The Board reviewed the global and domestic economic scenario, including risks to the outlook. It deliberated on

the annual accounts of the Reserve Bank for the FY 2025-26. The gross income of the Bank increased by 26.42 per cent over the previous year while the expenditure before risk provisions increased by 27.60 per cent. The net income, before risk provision and transfer to statutory funds, aggregated Rs

3,95,972.10 crore in FY 2025-26 as against Rs 3,13,455.77 crore in FY 2024-25, according to the RBI. "The revised Economic Capital Framework (ECF) provides flexibility to maintain the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) between the range of 4.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent of the size of the Balance Sheet," the Central Bank

said. Taking into consideration the current macroeconomic factors, financial performance of the Bank and maintenance of appropriate risk buffers, the Central Board decided to transfer Rs 1,09,379.64 crore towards the CRB for FY 2025-26 as against Rs 44,861.70 crore in the previous year, and maintain the CRB at 6.5 per cent

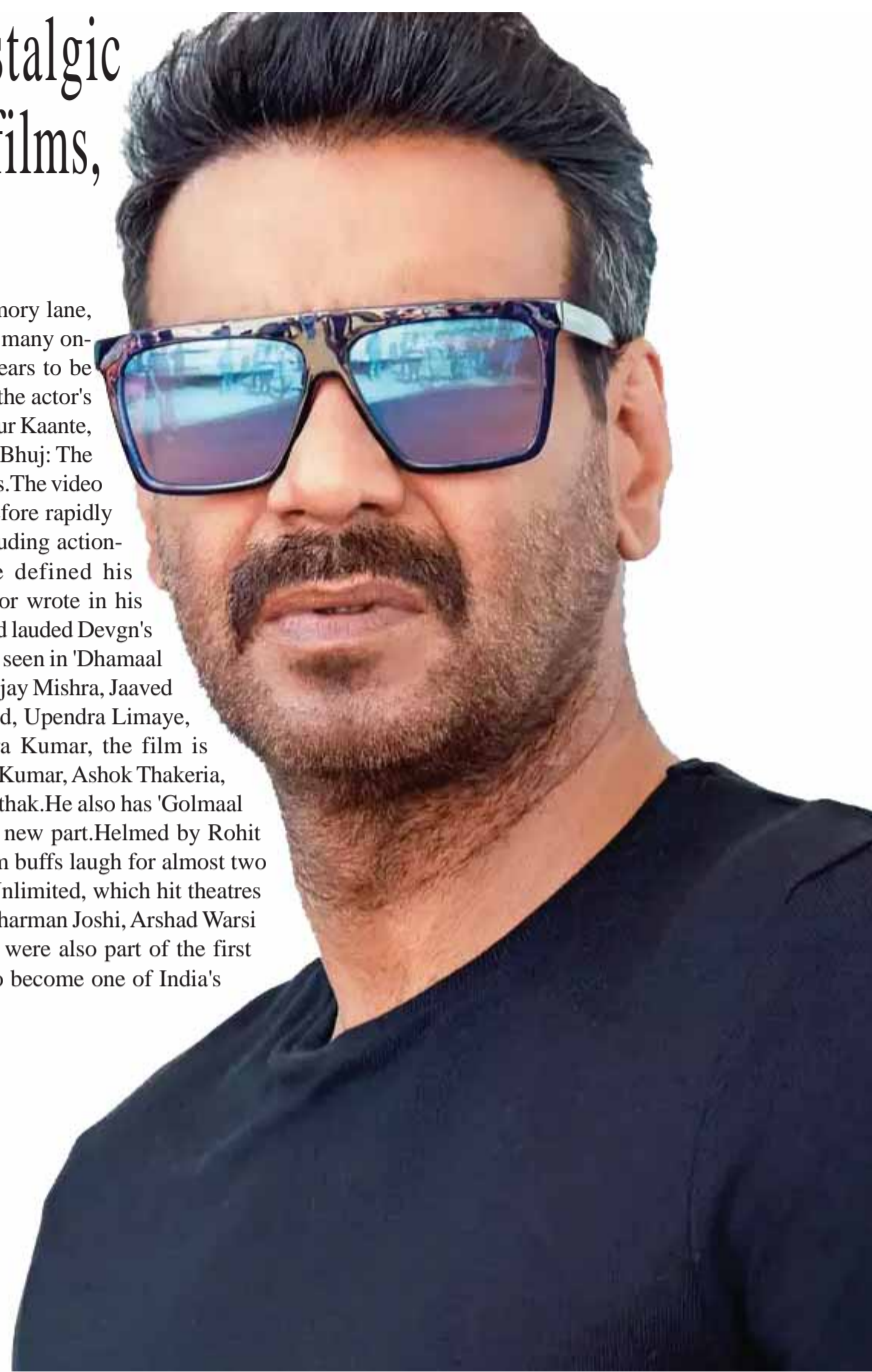
of the size of the RBI Balance Sheet. The Central Board approved the transfer of surplus of Rs 2,86,588.46 crore to the Central Government for the accounting year 2025-26. According to the Budget documents, the Centre expects Rs 3.16 lakh crore in dividends and surpluses from the Reserve Bank

of India, nationalised banks, and financial institutions in 2026-27.



Ajay Devgn offers nostalgic lookback at his iconic films, calls it "wild journey"

Actor Ajay Devgn took a nostalgic ride down memory lane, taking fans through a striking visual journey of his many on-screen avatars over the years. The clip, which appears to be AI-edited, seamlessly transitions between some of the actor's most memorable characters from films like 'Phool Aur Kaante, Once Upon A Time in Mumbai, Golmaal, Singham, Bhuj: The Pride of India, Drishyam and Shaitaan', among others. The video opens with one of Devgn's earlier intense looks before rapidly morphing into several fan-favourite personas, including action-packed, dramatic, and rugged roles that have defined his career. "Smooth transitions. Wild journey," the actor wrote in his caption. Fans quickly took to the comment section and lauded Devgn's journey. On the work front, Ajay Devgn will be next seen in 'Dhamaal 4', co-starring Riteish Deshmukh, Arshad Warsi, Sanjay Mishra, Jaaved Jaaferi, Esha Gupta, Sanjeeda Shaikh, Anjali Anand, Upendra Limaye, Vijay Patkar, and Ravi Kishan. Directed by Indra Kumar, the film is produced by Ajay Devgn, Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Ashok Thakeria, Indra Kumar, Anand Pandit, and Kumar Mangat Pathak. He also has 'Golmaal 5' in his kitty. Akshay Kumar is also a part of the new part. Helmed by Rohit Shetty, the Golmaal franchise has been making film buffs laugh for almost two decades now. The first instalment, Golmaal: Fun Unlimited, which hit theatres in 2006, became a huge hit. It starred Ajay Devgn, Sharman Joshi, Arshad Warsi and Tusshar Kapoor. Paresh Rawal and Rimi Sen were also part of the first film. Over the years, the Golmaal series went on to become one of India's most loved comedy franchises.



Supriya Pathak Kapur to make directorial debut with family biopic 'Our Story'

Indian actor Supriya Pathak Kapur is set to make her directorial debut with Our Story, a semi-biographical feature co-written with her daughter, Sanah Kapur. The project was officially unveiled at the Cannes Film Festival 2026. The film is a collaboration between Pathak Kapur's banner, Rabasusah, and Australian production company Films and Casting Temple. Australian-Indian filmmaker Anupam Sharma is on board as lead producer, while Ruhaan Kapur will serve as associate director and creative producer. Our Story is inspired by the lives of three women across three generations of Pathak Kapur's family: herself, her mother, the celebrated thespian Dina Pathak, and her daughter Sanah Kapur, who also shares screenplay credit. The film will feature key creative roles from both India and Australia and is being positioned for international sales and distribution. Our Story is deeply personal to me. It draws



from memory, family, womanhood, and the emotional inheritance that shapes who we become. To begin my journey as a director with a story so close to my heart, and to do so as an India-Australia collaboration, makes this all the more meaningful," Pathak Kapur told Variety. Forum Films has acquired theatrical distribution rights in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. The film is expected to make its market debut at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) Market in September. Pathak Kapur is widely recognized for her performances in Kalyug, Bazaar, Khichdi, and Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela. Her daughter, Sanah Kapur,

is known for Shaandaar, Ramprasad Ki Tehrvi, and Saroj Ka Rishta. "Supriya Pathak Kapur is one of the finest actors India has produced, and her move into direction with a story of this intimacy and scale is exciting in every way. We are proud to collaborate with her team and her new company and help shape Our Story as a genuinely international film from the ground up," said filmmaker Anupam Sharma.

SPORTS

Former Spain Defender Cesar Azpilicueta Announces Retirement From Professional Football

New Delhi, 22/5: Former Spain international defender Cesar Azpilicueta, who is currently playing for Sevilla FC, announced his retirement from professional football on Friday at the age of 36, saying the 2025-26 season was his last as a professional footballer. The defender, who played for Spain 44 times, made his announcement on social media. "This season will be my last as a professional footballer. After so many years living my dream, I feel it's time to start a new chapter in my life," wrote Azpilicueta, who admitted that "even though I have been preparing myself for this moment, I found it hard to write this letter." "When I first kicked a ball as a child in Pamplona with my schoolmates, I never imagined the amazing journey ahead. I'm grateful for every moment: the wins, the tough losses, the challenges, and most of all, the people I've met and the friendships I've made along the way," explained the defender, who began his career at his hometown club, Osasuna, making his first team debut in



April 2007, before joining Olympique Marseille, Chelsea FC, Atletico de Madrid before spending this season with Sevilla. "It has been a true privilege. Every moment has meant so much to me," he wrote. Over the course of a remarkable career spanning more than 800 matches, Azpilicueta represented Osasuna, Olympique de Marseille,

Chelsea, Atlético Madrid, Sevilla FC, and the Spain national team. His list of honours includes two League Cups and a French Super Cup in France, two Premier League titles, one FA Cup, an English League Cup, two UEFA Europa League titles, a UEFA Super Cup, and a FIFA Club World Cup. He joined Sevilla in the summer of 2025 and has made 16 appearances this season,

providing one assist. Despite his limited time in Nervion, the experienced player quickly became an important figure both on and off the pitch thanks to his leadership and professionalism in the dressing room. The defining moment of his career came in 2021 when he lifted the UEFA Champions League trophy as captain after leading Chelsea to beat Manchester City in Porto.

'They Need More Consistency From Overseas Players', Opines Bangar After CSK's Exit

New Delhi, 22/5: Former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar believes Chennai Super Kings (CSK) must focus on improving their overseas bowling and batting depth after the five-time champions crashed out of IPL 2026 following an 89-run defeat to the Gujarat Titans. The defeat confirmed CSK's elimination from the playoff race for the third consecutive season before the knockouts, as they ended their IPL 2026 campaign with just six wins from 14 matches. CSK were comprehensively outplayed by

GT, who posted a massive 229/4 riding on half-centuries from B Sai Sudharsan, Shubman Gill, and Jos Buttler before bundling Chennai out for 140 in just 13.4 overs. Bangar said the franchise now needs to strengthen its overseas contingent and fast-bowling depth ahead of the next edition. "CSK already have a strong Indian core with players like Ruturaj, Urvil Patel, Ayush, and Anshul Kambhoj showing promise. The bigger area they need to address is their overseas combination. They need more

consistency from their overseas batters and greater depth in the pace department," Bangar told Jio Hotstar. CSK struggled throughout the season to find a settled overseas combination, with their batting often lacking firepower in pressure situations, while their bowling attack also failed to deliver consistently in key phases. Against GT, the problems resurfaced once again as the bowlers leaked 229 runs before the batting collapsed to 31/3 inside the first three overs of the chase. Bangar stressed that Chennai's immediate priority

should be identifying experienced overseas players capable of making an immediate impact in crucial matches. "Finding experienced overseas players who can make an immediate impact will be important for them moving forward," he added. Despite the disappointing campaign, CSK witnessed encouraging performances from Indian players, with Sanju Samson leading the batting unit. Meanwhile, youngsters like Urvil Patel and Anshul Kambhoj showed some promise during the season.

Animated film on Lord Jagannath to release on 300+ screens



Ele Animations Pvt. Ltd. is bringing the world of Jay Jagannath to cinemas with its new animated feature Mahaprabhu Jagannath. Backed by a distribution deal with Cinepolis India, the film will open across more than 300 screens nationwide in Hindi, Odia and Telugu, marking a major theatrical expansion for the franchise. Rooted in rich devotional storytelling and Indian cultural imagination, Mahaprabhu Jagannath is designed as a wholesome family entertainer that seamlessly blends world-class animation with profound spiritual wisdom. The film takes a deep dive into the sacred lore of Lord Jagannath, presenting a treasure trove of cultural lessons and timeless values.

Tailored beautifully for younger audiences through vibrant, child-friendly visuals, the narrative maintains a deep emotional accessibility that ensures a heartwarming, magical experience for adults and kids alike. Reflecting on the vision behind bringing this divine saga to the silver screen, founder, director, and creative head of Ele, Durga Prasad Dalai said, "Our journey began with a vision to bring the divine stories of Mahaprabhu Jagannath to every household through animation. After seeing the overwhelming love our series received, taking this to the big screen was the natural next step. This film is not just about entertainment; it's about passing on our rich heritage and values to the next

generation in a way that is fun, engaging, and visually stunning." He added "But Mahaprabhu Jagannath is just the first chapter. It lays the cornerstone for our grander vision: the Sanatan Universe. We are building an interconnected cultural ecosystem that goes far beyond cinema, spanning TV, music, education, and even immersive experience destinations in Puri. By leveraging our civilizational memory, we want to position Indian spiritual storytelling as a premium global proposition and education about our deities and culture through the medium of entertainment. We are absolutely thrilled to begin this incredible journey and bring a culturally rooted, magical experience to families across India."