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Cabinet approves scheme for Assistance in Ration Transport & Handling-Income with 25,530 crore SARTHAK-PDS scheme

New Delhi: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs CCEA today approved continuation of the Scheme for Assistance in Ration Transport and Handling-Income with Automation in PDS, SARTHAK-PDS as an umbrella scheme, in the 16th Finance Commission cycle award period, with an outlay of 25 thousand 530 crore rupees as Central share.



enabled modules named NIRMAL, ASHA and SAKSHAM. He said, Nirmal is AI driven realtime PDS beneficiary registry, Asha is multilingual AI grievance and citizen engagement platform and Saksham is AI enabled supply chain platform with vehicle tracking.

Briefing media in New Delhi, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said, the scheme will provide assistance to state agencies for intra-state movement of food grains, will support fair price shops and help in modernisation of public distribution system.

The CCEA has also decided to revise the norms of Central assistance for meeting expenditure

Mr Vaishnav said, it will have three major AI

incurred by States and UTs intra-state movement and handling of foodgrains and Fair Price Shops dealers' margin and continuation of the existing funding pattern of Central Assistance.

The Minister said, the Scheme will work towards fulfilling the Government's commitment to 81.35 crore persons covered under National Food Security Act. He said, the scheme is not replacement of the existing PDS scheme.

PM Modi urges citizens to take precautions amid rising temperatures across country

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged citizens across the country to take necessary precautions amid the intense heatwave conditions being witnessed in several parts of India.

In a series of posts on X, the Prime Minister appealed to people to stay hydrated, carry water while stepping outdoors and extend help to others during the harsh weather conditions.

"Different parts of India are witnessing soaring temperatures and the challenges that come with it. This heat is harsh on all of us and I urge you all to take as many precautions as possible. Please stay hydrated, keep water with you when stepping out.

Offer a glass of water to others. In weather like this, such kindness goes a long way," PM Modi said.

The Prime Minister also advised people to remain alert to signs of heat exhaustion, including dizziness, nausea and extreme fatigue.

He said that if someone feels unusually weak, unwell or develops a headache, they should immediately be moved to a cool and shaded place and provided with water or Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS).

"Children, the elderly and those working outdoors are especially vulnerable during extreme heat. Ignoring these warning signs can quickly turn dangerous and may even lead to heatstroke. In such weather,



timely care and attention go a long way," he added.

PM Modi further urged citizens to regularly check on near and dear ones during the ongoing heatwave.

"Whenever possible,

call and check on elderly parents, grandparents and loved ones during this heatwave. Remind them to stay hydrated, avoid stepping out in peak afternoon hours and take

rest whenever possible," he said.

Emphasising compassion towards animals and birds during extreme weather conditions, the Prime Minister said, "In this extreme heat, let us also remember the birds and animals around us. A small bowl of water kept outside your home, balconies, terraces, shops or offices can become a lifeline for a thirsty bird. May compassion guide us in these difficult days."

Several parts of the country, including north and central India, have been witnessing severe heatwave conditions in recent days, with temperatures hovering around 45 degrees Celsius in some regions.

CBI arrests two more accused in NEET-UG 2026 paper leak case

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation today arrested two more persons in connection with the 2026 NEET-UG paper leak case. According to officials, those arrested include a Latur-based doctor and a member of the physics faculty at a coaching institute in Pune. Officials said the agency arrested Manoj Shirure for allegedly playing a key role in facilitating three students, including the son of Renukai Chemistry Classes (RCC) Coaching Institute founder Shivraj Motegaonkar, in obtaining the chemistry questions from NEET paper setter P.V. Kulkarni. Motegaonkar, who ran RCC in Latur, was recently arrested in the case.



Officials further informed that the agency also arrested Tejas Harshadkumar Shah, a physics teacher at Dr. Abhang Prabhu Medical Academy (APMA), a Pune-based coaching centre. Shah allegedly received the leaked physics questions for NEET-UG 2026 from arrested accused Manisha Havaladar. With these arrests, the total number of people arrested in the paper leak case has risen to 13. A CBI spokesperson said in a statement that the investigation to uncover the chain of events as well as the conspiracy behind the case is ongoing. He added that the CBI has so far conducted searches at 49 locations and seized several incriminating documents, laptops, and mobile phones. On May 12, the National Testing Agency (NTA) cancelled the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET, held on May 3 for medical admissions amid allegations of a paper leak. A re-examination has been scheduled for 21st next month.

TN CM Vijay meets PM Modi

New Delhi: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief Joseph Vijay on Wednesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Seva Teerth. This was his first meeting with PM Modi after assuming office earlier this month. On Tuesday, CM Vijay wrote a letter to PM Modi, requesting that the Centre stop the Karnataka government from proceeding with the construction of the Mekedatu dam across the Cauvery river.

Vijay also visited the Tamil Nadu House in Delhi, where he was given a ceremonial guard of honour. The visit marks his first major outreach at the national level after taking charge as Chief Minister. Vijay likely to meet key leaders across political spectrum

As part of his schedule in Delhi, Vijay is expected to hold meetings with several senior leaders. These include Vice President CP Radhakrishnan, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

He is also set to meet key Opposition leaders at 10 Janpath, including Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and Mallikarjun Kharge. A poster displaying Rahul Gandhi and Vijay



was reportedly seen outside the residence ahead of the meeting.

In addition, leaders from Left parties and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUM) are expected to meet the Chief Minister at Tamil Nadu House as a courtesy call during his stay in Delhi.

Vijay recently became Chief Minister after winning a trust vote in the state assembly on May 13. His party, the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), emerged as the

largest in the election with 108 seats. During the trust vote, he secured 144 votes in favour. The TVK and its allies together had 119 MLAs, while 22 voted against and five abstained. An expelled Amma Makkal Munnettra Kazagam (AMMK) MLA, Kamaraj, also supported the government. In a surprise development, 25 MLAs from the AIADMK reportedly broke ranks and voted in favour of Vijay.

Supreme Court upholds legality of ECI's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls

New Delhi: The Supreme Court today upheld the legality of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls done by the Election Commission of India and observed that electoral SIR advances the Constitutional imperative of free and fair elections. The Court held that the Election Commission has the power to conduct SIR under Article 324 of Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Rules made thereunder. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalaya Bagchi pronounced the judgment in the writ petitions, which challenged the notification issued by the ECI in June last year to conduct SIR in Bihar.

The Court held that the SIR process had a nexus with the goal of having free and fair elections. The judgment pronounced by CJI Surya Kant held that when the statute itself authorises a special revision at any time, for reasons to be recorded and in such manner as the Election Commission may deem fit, the impugned exercise cannot be invalidated merely because it does not conform in every respect to the ordinary modalities contemplated for routine revision. Therefore, it cannot be said that the Commission has acted in excess of its statutory powers.

The Court observed that the object sought to be achieved by the SIR bore a direct nexus with the constitutional goal of ensuring free and fair elections, noting that such elections did not rest merely on the mechanics of polling but fundamentally depended on the integrity, accuracy, and credibility of the electoral rolls, which formed the foundation of the democratic process. It further observed that the reasons recorded by the Election Commission, including the passage of more than four decades since the last intensive revision, large-scale additions and deletions over the years, and rapid urbanisation and migration leading to the possibility of duplication and inaccuracies in the electoral rolls, were clearly aimed at preserving that foundational integrity.

The Court rejected the argument that the procedure adopted by the ECI was contrary to the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. The Court also rejected the argument that the procedure negated the presumption of citizenship of persons already on rolls.

CM Mohan Majhi lays foundation stone for JSW Steel Plant in Paradip

Paradip, May 27 — Odisha added another chapter to its industrial journey on Tuesday as Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi laid the foundation stone for the construction of the blast furnace of the mega integrated steel plant being developed by JSW Steel at Dhinkia near Paradip.

The event marked the formal commencement of one of the largest industrial projects ever undertaken in the state and reinforced the government's vision of transforming Odisha into the "Steel Capital of India."

The mega project, which involves an investment of ₹1.25 lakh crore, is considered the single largest industrial investment in Odisha's history. The integrated steel plant will be developed in two phases and is expected to produce nearly 24 million tonnes of steel annually after completion. Along with the steel plant, the project will also include a 12 million tonne cement plant, a 900 MW captive power system, and a

dedicated jetty to strengthen logistics and export capabilities.

On the occasion, Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday said that the previous government had taken nearly 19 years after signing the MoU for the proposed POSCO steel plant to lay the foundation stone of the JSW Steel Plant in 2024, allegedly with an eye on the elections. In contrast, the present government initiated the commencement of construction work just two years after signing the MoU with JSW in 2024, which he described as a historic achievement in the country. He expressed hope that the plant would become operational by 2029. Addressing a gathering during the JSW integrated steel plant commencement programme at Paradip, the Chief Minister said the previous government had signed an MoU with South Korean steel giant POSCO in 2005 to establish a 12



Million Tonne Per Annum (MTPA) steel project near Paradip. However, due to an alleged lack of commitment, the company withdrew from the project in 2017. The acquired land was later transferred to JSW Utkal Steel Limited for development of the present project.

He alleged that the previous government laid the foundation stone of the JSW project on February 16, 2024, for electoral purposes. Later, JSW signed an MoU

with the state government in 2024 for establishing a 13.2 MTPA integrated steel plant. Shri Majhi informed that the commencement of construction work for the steel plant was inaugurated on Wednesday, advancing the project by nearly two years. As per the initial plan, work on the steel plant was expected to begin by 2028 after completion of the JSW pellet plant. However, construction work has started earlier, while foundation stones for the

coke oven, steel melting shop, blast furnace, captive port and sinter plant were also laid on the occasion. These units are expected to become operational by 2029.

He observed that the government had pressed the project, while JSW also urged the state government to speed up the required clearances and infrastructure support. As a result of the sincerity and cooperation

of officials and the administration, the project has advanced by nearly two years.

The Chief Minister said JSW would invest around Rs 1.25 lakh crore, including Rs 65,000 crore for the steel plant and the remaining amount for associated facilities, creating nearly 32,000 employment opportunities. He urged Sajjan Jindal, Chairman of the JSW Group, to provide employment opportunities to local people on a priority basis before recruiting others. He said JSW's investment reflected a strong commitment towards accelerating industrial growth and economic transformation in eastern India.

Majhi further said that the proposed world-class steel facility with a planned capacity of 13.2 MTPA would generate thousands of employment opportunities, strengthen

ancillary industries and further consolidate Odisha's position as a leading industrial and economic powerhouse.

He also added that the government had also decided to open two engineering colleges in Paradip and Bolangir so that local youths could acquire technical training and employment opportunities. He said JSW's entry into Odisha demonstrated confidence in the state's industrial policies and its potential as a manufacturing hub. The steel plant will be developed in phases, with long-term plans to expand capacity in line with market demand.

JSW Chairman Sajjan Jindal described the project as a defining moment for JSW Steel's growth and reaffirmed confidence in India's manufacturing future. He said the project aligns with Mission Purvodaya, the Government of India's initiative to unlock

eastern India's industrial potential. Once operational, the facility will strengthen Odisha's position as a steel hub and contribute significantly to India's industrial transformation.

He said the company had not come merely to establish a steel plant and earn profits, but also aimed to contribute to regional development by providing better education for children, skill training, modern schools, hospitals and employment opportunities for local youth, which, he emphasized, would multiply for the company.

Industry Minister Sampad Chandra Swain, local MP Bibhu Prasad Tarai, MLAs Sarada Jena, Amrendra Das and Ramakant Bhoi, Development Commissioner Hemant Sharma, Collector J. Sonal, and other JSW officials, including CEO Jayant Acharya and Commercial and Marketing Director Arun Maheshwari, were present on the occasion.

Puri: District-Level Review Meeting Held to Strengthen Law and Order Ahead of Rath Yatra

Puri : A district-level review meeting was held at the Puri police office under the leadership of Puri SP Prateek Singh to assess the law and order situation in the district and review preparations for upcoming major events.

The meeting was attended by DSPs from all subdivisions of the district, officers-in-charge of various police stations, outpost officials and senior headquarters officers. Additional SPs Sushil Kumar Mishra, Devi Pratap, Sachin Patel, Soumyaranjan Mallik and Ms Anakha K Vijay were also present.

The primary focus of the meeting was to review the district's law and order situation, ensure speedy investigation and disposal of criminal cases and make police functioning more



visible and trustworthy among the public. The SP directed officers to regularly and effectively monitor pending cases, with special emphasis on resolving long-pending matters at the earliest.

Discussions were also held on the use of technology in investigations, awareness regarding cybercrime and measures for the safety of

women and senior citizens.

Special attention was given to chronic disputes in rural areas, including land-related issues, family disputes, village-level conflicts and other social tensions. Police station officers were advised to hold regular peace committee meetings at the local level to ensure disputes are resolved

peacefully and within the framework of law.

The meeting also reviewed security arrangements and crowd management plans for the upcoming Debasana Purnima and Rath Yatra festivals. Traffic management and facilities for devotees were discussed in detail, considering the large influx of pilgrims and

tourists expected in Puri during the annual chariot festival.

Officers were instructed to remain on high alert during Rath Yatra. Plans were discussed to strengthen security through additional patrolling, surveillance, quick response teams and help centres at sensitive locations, including the sea beach, the Shree Jagannath Temple premises, Bada Danda and other key areas.

The SP urged all officers to maintain cordial relations with the public, listen to grievances with sensitivity and work towards enhancing public trust in the police. At the conclusion of the meeting, officials reiterated their commitment to working in coordination to maintain peace, security and law and order in the district in the coming days.

“Ripe Kendu” Rich in Medicinal Value Becoming Rare. Urgent Need to Protect Kendu Trees Before They Disappear



Sambalpur-11/05 (DMS) (Ramakanta Biswal)

Once deeply connected with rural life, folk culture and the livelihood of tribal communities, the ripe Kendu fruit is now gradually disappearing from forests. Due to deforestation, climate change and ecological imbalance, Kendu fruits are no longer found in forests as abundantly as before.

During the summer season, ripe Kendu fruits growing on forest trees used to serve not only as a delicious food source for villagers but also as a means of livelihood. Rural people collected the fruits from forests and sold them in local markets to earn their living. Earlier, people returning from forests after collecting Mahua flowers or Kendu leaves

would often bring back large quantities of ripe Kendu fruits. Many families even dried and stored the fruits for consumption during the rainy season.

Kendu fruit, also known as the “Indian Persimmon,” is rich in medicinal properties. It contains antioxidants, tannins, flavonoids, vitamin-C and dietary fiber in abundance. Consumption of Kendu helps improve immunity and digestion. It is also believed to reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels, thereby promoting heart health. Traditionally, the fruit has also been used in the treatment of skin and urinary disorders.

In the forested tribal regions of western Odisha, Kendu has long been regarded as an important

forest produce. Along with Mahua, Char, Sal flowers, honey and other forest products, Kendu served as a significant seasonal source of income for rural communities. However, the Kendu trees once commonly seen near village outskirts are now steadily vanishing.

Wild bears living in forests are also highly dependent on Kendu fruits as a food source. Environmentalists warn that the decline in Kendu availability may lead to food scarcity for wildlife in the coming years.

Environmental experts have therefore stressed the urgent need for large-scale plantation and conservation of Kendu trees in rural forest areas before both the tree and its valuable fruit disappear completely.

TMC MLA Arrested from Puri by West Bengal STF

Puri: The Special Task Force (STF) of the West Bengal Police on Wednesday arrested TMC MLA Dilip Mondal from Odisha's Puri



district. According to sources, Mondal was staying at Hotel Blue Lily in Puri, from where the STF team took him into custody following a search operation.

Dilip Mondal is the Trinamool Congress MLA from the Bishnupur Assembly constituency in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. He was reportedly absconding for the past several weeks. Sources said Mondal had checked into the hotel around 10 pm on Tuesday and was staying in room number 2132 along with another person. A West Bengal STF team reached the hotel on Wednesday morning and arrested him after conducting a search.

Speaking to the media after his arrest, Mondal alleged that he had been falsely implicated for supporting West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram. Earlier, reports had also emerged regarding the arrest of his son Arghya Mondal along with five others from the Bakkhali-Fraserganj area.

ACSO Caught red handed while taking bribes

Naresh Chandra Pattanayak Keonjhar: Keonjhar Vigilance sleuths unit officials on Wednesday caught Assistant Civil Supplies Officer (ACSO) of Champua block in Keonjhar Dhumaram Murmu, while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 15,000 from the in-charge of the Local Area Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society (LAMPCS) a farmer organisation.

Murmu was caught red-handed at his office while

allegedly demanding and accepting bribes in connection with the recent procurement of paddy during the current Kharif Marketing Season (KMS). In a press released the Odisha Vigilance department stated this in a press release.

Sources said that paddy has been procured through the said LamPCS in the current KMS. But the ACSO has not paid the due of the LamPCS despite several request. The ACSO allegedly

demanding bribes of Rs 15,000 to settle their amount. Later, the Managing Director of the LAMPCS complained about the matter to the Vigilance department. Today, the vigilance team caught him taking the demanded amount.

The Vigilance team seized the entire bribe amount of Rs 15,000 from his possession, an official statement said. Following the trap, the simultaneous raids were launched at

different locations to gather evidence of disproportionate properties. It is alleged that the ACSO was habitually demanding bribes from several paddy procurement centres in the area. He has to retire after two years. A case has been registered against him at the Balasore Vigilance Police Station under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018. Further investigation is underway.

Aditya Aluminium Project Lighthouse Successful Conducted. A massive Cleanliness.



Sambalpur-(DMS) : Project Lighthouse: From Doubt to Collective Action. A massive cleanliness drive was successfully conducted in Bomaloi Gram Panchayat with the support of Aditya Aluminium and implemented by NIWCYD under Project Lighthouse for promoting ODF+ and Zero Waste Villages. What began with hesitation among villagers soon transformed into a strong community-led movement. Through active participation in waste collection and village cleaning, the initiative inspired nearly 70 participants including youth, women, teachers, ASHA & Anganwadi workers, PRI members, and children. Special appreciation to community leaders Mr. Oliver Pradhan and Mr. Prafulla for motivating villagers and strengthening collective action towards a cleaner, healthier, and zero-waste future. The drive beautifully reflected that sustainable change becomes possible when communities come together with shared responsibility and commitment.



Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan visited the residence of popular Sambalpuri & Odia singer Mantu Chhuria at Rengali (Salad) and extended his greetings to the singer and his wife.

Pradhan conveyed his best wishes to the couple and prayed to Goddess Maa Samaleswari for a happy, prosperous, and blessed married life filled with peace and happiness.

TWO FARMER ENGINEERS DASPALLA, NAYAGARH CONVICTED IN VIGILANCE CORRUPTION CASE.

SAMBALPUR-25/04(DMS)

In a significant anti-corruption development, Odisha Vigilance has secured the conviction of two former engineers of Maneswar Block, Dist-Sambalpur, in a corruption case. Today Sadananda Pradhan, Former Asst. Engineer (Retired), Maneswar Block, Dist-Sambalpur and Biranchi Narayan Dash, Ex-Jr.Engineer, Maneswar Block, Dist-Sambalpur, A/p-AE, Brutang Irrigation Project, Daspalla, Dist-Nayagarh, who were charge sheeted by Odisha Vigilance U/s 13(2) r/w 13(1)(c)(d) of PC Act, 1988/409/468/120-B IPC for misappropriation of Govt. money by recoding inflated measurement of a road improvement work under MGNREG Scheme in the year 2008-2009 in Maneswar Block. Both the accused persons, namely Sri Dash & Sri Pradhan were convicted by Hon'ble Special Judge, Vigilance, Sambalpur. The Hon'ble Court sentenced each convict to undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of 2 years and fine.

Both the accused persons, namely Sri Dash & Sri Pradhan were convicted by Hon'ble Special Judge, Vigilance, Sambalpur. The Hon'ble Court sentenced each convict to undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of 2 years and fine. Odisha Vigilance will now move the competent authority for stoppage of pension of Sadananda Pradhan, Former AE (Retired) and dismissal of Biranchi Narayan Dash, AE, Brutang Irrigation Project, Daspalla, Dist-Nayagarh following their conviction.

Industrial Town Rengali: A Revenue Powerhouse, Yet a Healthcare Void. The True Test of a People-Centric Government.

Sambalpur, May 27 (By Ramakanta Biswal)

Rengali, the industrial hub of Sambalpur district, has emerged as one of Odisha's key centres of industrialisation. With its mines, thermal power projects, large-scale industries and multinational investments, the region has secured a prominent place on the state's economic map. Administrative growth has also followed, with Rengali evolving from a Gram Panchayat to a Block headquarters, an Assembly constituency and a Notified Area Council (NAC). The mines and industries operating in the region contribute crores of rupees to the state exchequer every

year. Yet a fundamental question remains: how much of this wealth is actually improving the lives of the local people?

The character of any government is not measured by the size of its projects, the volume of its revenue, or the scale of its publicity campaigns. It is reflected in the quality of life enjoyed by ordinary citizens. Access to healthcare, education, safe drinking water and a secure living environment are the real indicators of development and good governance. Unfortunately, despite its industrial prosperity, Rengali continues to face a serious deficit in one of the most basic public services—healthcare.

While limited medical

services are available during the day, the situation changes drastically after sunset. As evening falls, healthcare services virtually come to a standstill. In cases of accidents, sudden illness or medical emergencies involving pregnant women, residents are often forced to rush patients to Sambalpur or other towns. This not only causes inconvenience but can also put lives at risk.

The irony is difficult to ignore. The very region whose land, water, forests and mineral resources have fuelled industrial growth continues to struggle for basic healthcare facilities. Industrialisation should not be measured solely in terms of production, investment and profit. Its ultimate



purpose must be to improve the lives of the people who live in and around these industrial centres. If local communities are denied access to essential healthcare, can such development truly be called successful?

Governments often speak

of building a “people's government.” But the real test of such a claim lies in whether public institutions stand by citizens when they need them the most. When a patient suffers at night due to the absence of medical care, grand narratives of development and progress begin

to lose their meaning.

Addressing this challenge requires a coordinated effort from the government, administration and industrial establishments. Rengali urgently needs round-the-clock healthcare services, adequate deployment of doctors and

medical staff, modern emergency care facilities and a well-equipped hospital capable of serving the growing population. Industries must also ensure that their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives move beyond symbolic activities and make visible, long-term contributions to healthcare infrastructure and public welfare.

The people of Rengali are not asking for special privileges. They are demanding what is rightfully theirs—basic constitutional rights, including access to healthcare, safety and a life of dignity. It is neither fair nor sustainable that a region contributing significantly to the state's economy should remain deprived of essential public services.

The issue facing Rengali is not merely a local healthcare concern. It raises a larger question about the meaning of development itself. Should progress be measured only through revenue generation, industrial output and investment figures, or should it also be judged by the health, security and dignity of the people?

Until the residents of Rengali can rely on accessible and dependable healthcare services at all hours, the story of development in this industrial town will remain incomplete.

After all, no development is greater than human life, and no government achievement is more meaningful than ensuring the health and well-being of its people.

Rengali: Who Benefits from Industrialisation, and Who Pays the Price

Sambalpur, May 27:
(By Ramakanta Biswal)

Rengali in Sambalpur district has emerged as one of Odisha's major industrial and mining hubs. While towering factories, mines, thermal power projects and industrial units symbolize development, the lives of the people living beneath these chimneys raise serious questions. It is time to examine who has truly benefited from this industrial expansion and who has been pushed towards an uncertain future.

Thousands of acres of land were acquired for industrial projects, forcing many families to give up their farmland, homes, forests and traditional livelihoods. They were promised employment, economic prosperity and

regional development. However, many displaced families are still struggling to secure the rights and benefits they were assured. A large number of land-losers have been left with temporary and contractual jobs instead of permanent employment.

One of the biggest concerns is that the youth of the very region that contributed land for industrial growth continue to face unemployment. Residents allege that local youth have not been provided adequate opportunities in many industries. Whether in direct employment or contract work, there is a widespread perception that local interests are often overlooked in decision-making processes. Such perceptions weaken trust between industries and the



communities around them. Another major issue is local participation in development. When people living in resource-rich areas

are excluded from the benefits generated by those resources, social discontent grows. Many villages in Rengali continue to struggle

with unemployment, poverty and uncertainty about the future. As a result, a significant number of young people are migrating

to other states in search of work.

Rising unemployment and economic inequality also carry social

consequences. Frustration, hopelessness and the lack of opportunities can contribute to social instability and anti-social activities. If industrialisation fails to improve the quality of life of local communities, the very purpose of development comes into question.

There are also concerns regarding corruption, lack of transparency and the dominance of influential groups. While such allegations require proper investigation and evidence, their existence reflects a deeper issue—many people feel that the administration, political leadership and industrial establishments have failed to earn public trust.

The need of the hour in Rengali is a fair and inclusive industrial policy. Displaced

families require sustainable livelihoods, local youth deserve priority in employment, contract allocations should be strengthened and industries should strictly fulfil their social responsibility commitments. Otherwise, the glitter of industrial growth will continue to overshadow the hardships of those whose sacrifices laid its foundation.

The issues facing Rengali are not confined to one region alone. They raise a fundamental question about India's model of industrialisation: should development be measured only by factory chimneys and industrial output, or by the happiness, security and dignity of the people whose lives are most affected by it.

Demand Raised for Opening PNB Branch at Laida Village in Sambalpur.



Sambalpur, April 26 (DMS) A strong demand has been raised by residents for opening a branch of Punjab National Bank (PNB) in Laida, one of the largest villages in Sambalpur district.

People from Laida along with nearby panchayats such as Rengloi, Kinaloi, Mahada, Kenadhupa, and Sodhamal have collectively submitted a signed memorandum to the Regional Manager of PNB. The memorandum was handed over to the branch manager at Kuchinda under the leadership of former president of Laida Farmers' Association Saroj Pujari, Mahesh Agrawal, and senior journalist Harihar Nath.

Laida, which falls under Rengali block, serves as a key hub for trade, education, healthcare, and agriculture for nearly seven panchayats. The village hosts several government offices and institutions, including a degree college, two high schools, multiple primary and upper primary schools,

a Saraswati Shishu Mandir, an English-medium school, a community health center catering to 16 panchayats, a veterinary center, a revenue inspector's office, a sub-post office, and a police outpost managing law and order in four panchayats.

Residents stated that although branches of State Bank of India and Utkal Grameen Bank already exist in Laida, they are insufficient to meet the growing financial demands of the area. With increasing commercial activity and infrastructure development, the need for additional banking services has become urgent.

Locals believe that opening a PNB branch in Laida would significantly benefit farmers, government employees, traders, and the general public across six panchayats. The memorandum reportedly carries signatures of over 400 people, including sarpanches and representatives of various organizations.

Odisha Rolls Out Robust Kharif 2026 Strategy to Counter Below-Normal Monsoon & El Niño Forecast

Bhubaneswar/Balangir-27 MAY 2026 : In response to the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) forecast of below-normal South-West monsoon rainfall and potential El Niño impacts in the state, Odisha's Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Agriculture, Farmers' Empowerment & Energy Minister Shri Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo today chaired a high-level virtual review meeting to deploy a comprehensive Kharif 2026 crop contingency and preparedness strategy. Addressing district administrations via video conference, the Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister Shri Singh Deo issued a directive for all departments, district authorities, and research institutions to work in absolute coordination to safeguard farmers' interests during the upcoming season. "Key Directives Issued to District Administrations: 1. Seed Management & Climate-Resilient Agriculture: Pre-Positioning Stock: The Managing Director of Odisha State Seeds Corporation (OSSC) must ensure the timely distribution of certified seeds by the first week of June 2026, prioritizing remote and vulnerable districts. 2. Focus on Short-Duration Varieties: In areas vulnerable to rain deficits, authorities must ensure an adequate supply and focus on short and medium-duration paddy, pulses, oilseeds, and millet seeds. 3. Crop Diversification & Contingency: District teams must actively promote crop diversification in upland and rainfed areas. In the event of a delayed monsoon, a Community Nursery Approach

will be adopted. 4. Buffer Reserves: OSSC must maintain an adequate reserve stock of paddy, pulses, and oilseed seeds to handle any weather-related exigencies. 5. Fertilizer Security & Anti-Hoarding Measures: Last-Mile Delivery: MARKFED, PACS, and LAMPSCS must ensure seamless, last-mile fertilizer delivery to farmers. Uninterrupted supply must be maintained by fertilizer companies despite global market uncertainties. 6. Strict Enforcement: District Collectors have been instructed to closely supervise fertilizer distribution. The state will enforce zero-tolerance measures against black marketing, hoarding, and illegal diversion of fertilizers. 7. Soil Health: Field teams will promote balanced and integrated nutrient management based on individual Soil Health Cards, alongside green manuring and water conservation practices. 8. Crop Insurance & Agristak: Comprehensive Crop Insurance: Officials must maximize farmer enrollment under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). To minimize the financial burden on cultivators, the State Government of Odisha is bearing the complete premium of the farmer's share (up to 2 hectares per farmer), requiring only a token validation fee of ₹1/- per application. 9. Mandatory Farmer Registry: District teams must accelerate and complete their Farmer Registry targets. Registration is mandatory for farmers to seamlessly access benefits under PM-KISAN,

subsidized fertilizer/seed purchases, and government procurement. 10. Technical Support & Field Awareness: Real-Time Agro-Advisories: Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), through its Krishi Vigyan Kendras (VKVs), will provide real-time, location-specific, weather-based agro-advisories. OUAT will also extend technical support for pest management and stress-tolerant crop varieties. 11. Digital Outreach: Crop advisories must be prominently displayed on LED screens at both district and state levels to maximize reach. 12. Ground-Level Mobilization: District contingency teams must remain fully active throughout the Kharif season. Field officers are mandated to regularly visit villages, interact directly with farmers, and conduct extensive awareness programs regarding dry-spell preparedness. The meeting was attended by the Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Agriculture & FE) Shri Sachin Ramchandra Jadhav, Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Co-operation Department) Shri Rajesh Pravar Patil, Vice Chancellor of OUAT Dr. Pravat Kumar Roul, Director of Agriculture & Food Production, Shri Shubham Saxena, Director Horticulture, Shri Kalunge Gorakh Waman, Director of IMD, Dr. Manorama Mohapatra, Collector Balangir Gourav Shivaji Isalwar and other senior departmental officers.

Rayagada Gets New Superintendent of Police; Raj Prasad Assumes Charge

Rayagada: Raj Prasad officially assumed charge as the new Superintendent of Police (SP) of Rayagada district on Wednesday. He took over the responsibility from former SP Swati S Kumar.

Soon after taking charge, the new SP interacted with media representatives and emphasized that maintaining a strong and healthy relationship between the police and the public would be one of his top priorities. He stated that special focus would be given to maintaining law and order across the district and that criminal activities would not be tolerated under any circumstances.

SP Raj Prasad further highlighted several priority areas for the district police administration, including the safety and security of women, children, and vulnerable sections of society. He also stressed the need for stronger action

against cybercrime and announced measures to improve the functioning of non-operational CCTV cameras across the district.

The new SP said that efforts would be intensified to strengthen the traffic management system and implement preventive measures to make the district crime-free. He assured that strict legal action would be taken against offenders in accordance with the law.

In addition, the police department will closely investigate the illegal movement of arms and weapons into the district, including identifying the sources and individuals involved in such activities.

Concluding his address, SP Raj Prasad appealed to the people of Rayagada to cooperate with the police administration in maintaining peace, harmony, and effective law and order throughout the district.

CM Rekha Gupta directs officials to implement welfare schemes transparently

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta directed senior officials to ensure that all welfare schemes and development projects announced in the state Budget are implemented transparently and within the stipulated timeframe.

The Chief Minister chaired a review meeting through video conferencing with administrative secretaries and heads of departments to assess the progress of public welfare initiatives and development works.

According to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Gupta instructed officials to execute every Budget announcement effectively with transparency and accountability so that benefits reach the public without delay.

"The chief minister directed the officers to implement every announcement in the budget effectively with transparency, accountability, and within the stipulated timeframe," the CMO said in a statement.

The meeting focused on monitoring the status of various welfare schemes, infrastructure projects and governance-related initiatives announced by the Delhi government.

Meanwhile, CM Rekha Gupta also appealed to citizens to remain cautious amid the ongoing heatwave conditions in the national capital.

In a message posted on social media platform X, she urged people to stay hydrated, avoid prolonged exposure to sunlight and take care of their families during the extreme weather.

"Drink plenty of water, keep your body hydrated and protect yourself from the harsh sunlight," Gupta said.

She also appealed to residents to care for animals and birds by arranging water and shade for them during the intense summer heat.

Industrial Growth Must Go Hand in Hand with Workers' Development International Workers' Day Observed at Khinda.

Sambalpur-(DMS) "Development of the nation is possible only when industrial growth is accompanied by the development of workers," said Sanjit Mahanti, President of the Kendu Leaf Workers' Union, while speaking at an event marking International Workers' Day.

He stated that while governments and leaders may change, the values of labour unions—built on years of sacrifice and struggle—remain constant. He emphasized that workers can achieve their rights only through unity and collective efforts under strong unions.

The International Workers' Day was observed at Khinda under Rengali block in Sambalpur district. The programme was organized by the Surendra Sai Workers' Union and was presided



over by its Executive President Babulu Raut, with coordination by Akshaya Satpathy.

Several prominent personalities attended the event, including Founder President Kiran Behera, student leader Milan Hota, E. Gandhi Behera, senior journalist Ramakanta Biswal, journalists Himanshu Mishra and Naresh Mahana, Swadhin Ekata Organization President Rajib Mishra,

advisor Durga Prasad Sahu, Khinda Sarpanch Sandhyarani Pradhan, and Malda Sarpanch Rinki Singh, along with representatives from various companies.

Senior officials from NLC and Adani companies were also present and expressed their commitment towards the overall development and welfare of workers.

On this occasion, Executive President

Babulu Raut announced that the union would provide financial assistance of ₹51,000 to workers' families in case of marriage or death. He also highlighted various welfare initiatives undertaken by the union for workers.

The programme concluded with cultural performances by noted artist Umakanta Barik, singer Amrita Nayak, and album artist Jayashree Sadangi, which entertained the audience.

Demand Raised for Opening PNB Branch at Laida Village in Sambalpur.

Sambalpur, April 22 (DMS) A strong demand has been raised by residents for opening a branch of Punjab National Bank (PNB) in Laida, one of the largest villages in Sambalpur district.

People from Laida along with nearby panchayats such as Rengloi, Kinaloi, Mahada, Kenadhupa, and Sodhamal have collectively submitted a signed memorandum to the Regional Manager of PNB. The memorandum was handed over on Tuesday to the branch manager at Kuchinda under the leadership of former president of Laida Farmers' Association Saroj Pujari, Mahesh Agrawal, and senior journalist Harihar Nath.

Laida, which falls under Rengali block, serves as a key hub for trade, education, healthcare, and agriculture for nearly seven panchayats. The village hosts several government offices and institutions,



including a degree college, two high schools, multiple primary and upper primary schools, a Saraswati Shishu Mandir, an English-medium school, a community health center catering to 16 panchayats, a veterinary center, a revenue inspector's office, a sub-post office, and a police outpost managing law and order in four

panchayats. Residents stated that although branches of State Bank of India and Utkal Grameen Bank already exist in Laida, they are insufficient to meet the growing financial demands of the area. With increasing commercial activity and infrastructure development, the need for additional banking services

has become urgent. Locals believe that opening a PNB branch in Laida would significantly benefit farmers, government employees, traders, and the general public across six panchayats. The memorandum reportedly carries signatures of over 400 people, including sarpanches and representatives of various organizations.

Reservation Question

THE Supreme Court's recent observation questioning whether children of highly privileged officials should continue availing themselves of reservation benefits deserves thoughtful engagement. The court has raised a necessary question: should affirmative action continue benefiting relatively advanced families while many among the most deprived remain excluded? Reservation remains indispensable in India because caste and poverty continue to overlap sharply. According to multidimensional poverty estimates, a vast majority of India's poor belong to SC, ST and OBC communities. Historical exclusion from land ownership, education, dignified employment and social mobility has left deep structural inequalities that cannot be wished away through rhetoric about merit alone.

Yet the Supreme Court is equally right in recognising that these communities are not homogeneous. In the Davinder Singh judgment, the court acknowledged that some sub-castes remain significantly more backward and underrepresented than others. Then Chief Justice BR Gavai also cautioned that relatively advanced sections within reserved categories were cornering a disproportionate share of quota benefits, leaving the "weakest of the weak" behind. This is the heart of the debate. Social justice cannot become hereditary privilege. The child of an impoverished Dalit labourer in a remote village does not begin life from the same position as the child of senior civil servants, professionals or politically influential families, even if both belong to reserved categories. Access to elite schooling, urban networks, financial stability and institutional familiarity creates undeniable advantages.

None of this weakens the case for reservation. Rather, it strengthens the argument for refining it so that benefits penetrate deeper into communities still trapped in deprivation. The objective should not be to dilute affirmative action, but to democratise it within the marginalised themselves. A policy designed to uplift the disadvantaged must constantly ask who remains the most disadvantaged today.

Reevaluation Muddle

AFTER the NEET-scarred National Testing Agency, it's the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) that has come under nationwide scrutiny. The board's On-Screen Marking (OSM) system has been beset by complaints of glitches and discrepancies. Some Class-12 students have flagged a mismatch between their answer sheets and the scanned copies uploaded under the re-evaluation process. This is much more than a technical problem; it's a warning about the growing fragility of India's exam ecosystem, which determines the future of millions of students. The case of a student, Vedant Srivastava, is especially alarming because the CBSE itself admitted that the wrong answer sheet had been shared (it subsequently sent him the correct one). Another examinee, Sanjana, reportedly received a similar response from the board. The acknowledgement of these embarrassing errors is welcome, provided it is followed by strict action against erring officials.

The larger concern is that students had to resort to social media campaigns before corrective steps were taken. In a fair and transparent education system, grievance redressal should not depend on public outrage, political intervention or online visibility. What's worse, Vedant was brutally trolled for questioning a potentially flawed system. Some Netizens chose to brand the teenager "anti-national" and even "Pakistani" for raising concerns about his marks. It's shocking that a genuinely aggrieved Indian citizen was treated as a traitor. Should students face harassment merely because their complaints leave premier national organisations red-faced?

Rapid digitisation without adequate testing creates vulnerabilities that disproportionately harm students. The CBSE's damage-control exercise is no substitute for systemic reform. The board must promptly order an independent audit of the OSM system and scanning procedures. Exam boards and testing agencies are custodians of merit and fair play. India's beleaguered education system can save face only if it guarantees basic procedural reliability.

Resetting Indo-US Ties: Challenges and Opportunities

Tejeswar Patnaik

Henry Kissinger, America's former Secretary of State, once said, "America has no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests." This observation now appears true for almost all nations. In this era of globalization, economic competition, and the pursuit of national interest have become integral to the foreign policy of every country.

Amid the ongoing peace talks between the US and Iran reportedly mediated by Pakistan, US President Donald Trump's recent visit to China attracted global attention. However, the ceremonial welcome given to Trump was not as grand as expected. China's relatively cold approach conveyed a clear message that it has enough leverage to shape global trade diplomacy on its own terms. America understands this reality well, as it remains dependent on China for manufacturing goods, critical inputs, and supply chains.

Trump's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping did not yield any breakthroughs, except for China's decision to purchase around 200 Boeing commercial aircraft and permission to import advanced processors from a US chip-making company. China also firmly reiterated that Taiwan remains an inseparable part of China. The issue of trade imbalance between the two countries remained unresolved. In 2025, US exports to China stood at around \$106.3 billion, while China's exports to the US were nearly \$308.4 billion. Despite trade tensions, the US remains

fully aware of China's growing economic, military, and technological strength.

Soon after Trump's visit, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Beijing and received a very grand welcome. Russia and China signed nearly twenty agreements covering artificial intelligence, the digital economy, and technological cooperation aimed at bypassing Western sanctions. China has remained Russia's largest trading partner and the biggest importer of Russian oil. Putin's visit further reinforced the growing friendship between the two countries, while both nations jointly criticised US foreign policy.

Against this backdrop, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's sudden visit to India has become the subject of intense debate. Is Rubio's visit intended to reset US-India relations? Is America serious about treating India as an equal strategic partner to counter China's influence? Will the trust deficit between India and the US be bridged through Rubio's diplomatic efforts? These questions require serious assessment by India's foreign policy establishment.

Since Trump began his second term as US President, India has repeatedly faced diplomatic discomfort and humiliation from the US administration. Trump claimed credit for preventing the escalation of the India-Pakistan conflict into a nuclear confrontation and repeatedly asserted that his intervention secured the ceasefire between the two countries. India faced embarrassment

from the US President's comments and rejected those claims.

The situation worsened when Trump described the Indian economy as "dead" and criticised India's tariff regime as among the highest in the world. His administration imposed a 25 per cent tariff on Indian exports, accusing India of unfair trade practices. Trump also criticised India for purchasing Russian oil despite Western sanctions on Moscow, while remaining silent on China's much larger oil imports from Russia.

Political controversy deepened after Trump reposted a social media message by a television commentator describing India as a "hellhole." The remarks triggered outrage across the country, with opposition parties demanding a strong response from the Modi government. Opposition leaders repeatedly questioned the government over Trump's statements and his claims regarding mediation between India and Pakistan.

Rubio's visit therefore aimed at rebuilding bilateral ties after a strategic rethinking in Washington. Coming soon after the US-China summit, his visit sought to revive the earlier concept of a "natural partnership" between India and the United States. Discussions reportedly centred on India's energy security concerns and the strengthening of the Indo-Pacific alliance through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) framework.

However, India must remain cautious while dealing with the US, particularly under Trump's

transactional style of diplomacy. Strategic autonomy, multi-alignment policy and protection of national interests must continue to guide Indian foreign policy. India has already made it clear that its energy decisions will be based solely on national requirements and affordability. New Delhi has consistently maintained that it remains free to purchase oil from any country according to its national interests.

The United States also understands that no other country in South Asia possesses India's demographic strength, strategic geography, military capability, and huge domestic market of 1.4 billion people. America therefore cannot afford to remain detached from India. At the same time, India benefits from relations with the US through technology transfer, foreign investment, global markets, and supply chains.

The QUAD partnership involving India, the US, Japan, and Australia remains central to Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy aimed at balancing China's growing influence. Maritime security, defence technology, and regional cooperation will continue to shape this partnership in the coming days.

India and the United States may continue to differ on several geopolitical and economic issues, but both countries understand the importance of long-term strategic engagement. In an increasingly multipolar world order, India's challenge will be to strengthen global partnerships while firmly protecting its sovereignty, strategic autonomy, and national interests.

(Patnaik is a former banker)

Digital Anganwadi: Building Smart Villages

Madhusudan Mishra

India is passing through a historic phase of digital transformation that is reshaping governance, education, healthcare, and public service delivery across the nation. Amid this technological transition, the Anganwadi system under the Integrated Child Development Services has emerged as one of the most important grassroots institutions capable of transforming the future of millions of children and mothers. For decades, Anganwadi Centres have served as the backbone of early childhood care by providing supplementary nutrition, preschool education, immunization support, health awareness, and maternal guidance in rural and tribal communities. Today, however, the traditional Anganwadi system stands at the threshold of a new revolution. The concept of the Digital Anganwadi offers a visionary pathway for converting ordinary childcare centres into smart community learning hubs that combine technology, compassion, education, nutrition, and public participation for national development.

A Digital Anganwadi is not merely a building equipped with a smartphone or a tablet. It is a people-centric model designed to create a vibrant ecosystem where children learn joyfully, mothers receive timely health guidance, and Anganwadi workers become digitally empowered community educators. It represents a fusion of modern technology with human sensitivity and grassroots welfare. In a country where children constitute a major portion of the population, strengthening early childhood development through digital empowerment can become one of the strongest foundations for building a healthy, educated, and self-reliant India.

The Government of India has already initiated several important reforms under Poshan Abhiyaan and Saksham Anganwadi programmes. In many states, Anganwadi workers are being provided smartphones for real time nutritional monitoring, growth tracking, and service delivery management. The Poshan Tracker application is gradually replacing manual paperwork and enabling greater transparency, accountability, and efficiency in child welfare



administration. These reforms indicate a major shift from traditional welfare delivery towards evidence-based digital governance that can improve policy planning and targeted intervention.

Odisha possesses immense potential to become a national leader in Digital Anganwadi transformation. The state has consistently demonstrated innovation in women empowerment, nutrition programmes, disaster management, and social welfare implementation. With thousands of Anganwadi Centres spread across tribal districts, coastal regions, and rural villages, Odisha can pioneer a model where technology becomes a bridge between governance and human development. Digitally empowered Anganwadis can significantly improve child nutrition, maternal healthcare, preschool learning, and social awareness in underserved communities.

The empowerment of Anganwadi workers themselves is central to the success of this transformation. These frontline workers perform extraordinary responsibilities under challenging circumstances. Traditionally burdened with paperwork, surveys, and reporting duties, many workers struggle because of limited technological exposure and insufficient training opportunities. Digital learning modules, mobile-based educational videos, online workshops, and interactive communication platforms can greatly improve their confidence and efficiency. Training in early childhood education, child psychology, nutritional counselling, health awareness, and digital communication can transform Anganwadi workers from welfare functionaries into respected grassroots educators and social leaders.

Digital Anganwadi Centres can also play a revolutionary role in addressing malnutrition, stunting,

anaemia, and developmental disorders among children. Through smart growth monitoring systems, workers can record height, weight, vaccination schedules, and nutritional indicators in real time. Mobile applications can generate alerts regarding severe malnutrition, delayed immunization, or developmental concerns requiring immediate attention. Such technology-driven monitoring systems can help governments identify vulnerable regions quickly and ensure timely intervention for children facing health risks.

In remote tribal districts such as Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, and Kandhamal, Digital Anganwadi Centres can become lifelines of hope and awareness. Solar-powered devices, offline educational content, telemedicine support, and multilingual learning materials can help overcome geographical isolation and infrastructural challenges. Educational content rooted in local culture, tribal languages, and folk traditions can make learning more inclusive, meaningful, and emotionally connected for children and families.

Parents and mothers must also become active participants in this transformation journey. A child's growth cannot depend entirely upon institutions unless families are empowered with knowledge and awareness. Digital counselling sessions, health videos, parenting guidance programmes, and mobile-based communication platforms can strengthen coordination between Anganwadi Centres and households.

At the same time, society must remain cautious about the growing danger of uncontrolled mobile exposure among children. Digital Anganwadis should promote responsible and balanced use of technology rather than unhealthy dependence. Technology must remain a tool for education,

creativity, awareness, and empowerment, not a replacement for outdoor activity, emotional bonding, storytelling, and human interaction.

The role of Panchayati Raj Institutions, women leaders, and Self-Help Groups is equally important in this movement. Odisha's Mission Shakti initiative has already demonstrated the extraordinary power of women-led community participation. If women collectives, local teachers, social organizations, and Panchayat representatives actively support Anganwadi digitization, community ownership and accountability will improve substantially. Digital Anganwadi Centres can gradually evolve into centres of women empowerment, digital literacy, environmental awareness, and social cooperation.

India's dream of becoming a developed nation by 2047 will not depend solely upon highways, industries, and urban infrastructure. It will also depend upon the quality of childhood nutrition, foundational learning, emotional wellbeing, and maternal healthcare available in villages and tribal communities. Investment in Digital Anganwadi systems is therefore not merely a welfare measure. It is a long-term investment in human capital, social justice, and national progress.

Nevertheless, challenges such as poor internet connectivity, electricity shortages, digital illiteracy, and work overload among Anganwadi workers must be addressed with sensitivity and practical planning.

The Digital Anganwadi movement represents far more than technological modernization. It symbolizes a compassionate national vision where innovation, education, nutrition, healthcare, and community participation unite for the welfare of every child. When an Anganwadi worker uses digital tools to save a malnourished child, when a tribal mother receives timely healthcare guidance through mobile communication, and when a village child learns joyfully through smart educational content, digital governance acquires real human meaning. This transformation can awaken national consciousness towards protecting childhood dignity, learning, nutrition, and human compassion. If implemented with inclusiveness, creativity, and sensitivity, Digital Anganwadis can become the foundation of a healthier, smarter, compassionate, and empowered India.

(The writer is a former IAS officer)

Noida authority launches 10 crore drain-cleaning drive ahead of rains

Noida, 27/5: The Noida authority on Tuesday said it has directed all circle officials to clean and de-silt city drains in all sectors before the arrival of monsoon. Officials said ₹10 crore has been earmarked for the project. AK Arora, general manager of Noida authority, told HT, "All ten work circles are directed to issue tenders in their respective jurisdictions without delay. If the drains are not cleaned on time, action will be taken against senior manager of the respective work circles." Noida has 25 arterial stormwater drains spread across nearly 87km. Among the major drains are the 9.4km channel connecting Sector

44 to 136, the 8.3km drain linking Harola in Sector 5 to Sector 51, 7.9km stretch connecting Sector 64 to Mamura Crossing, a 1.1km drain from Sector 62 to Labour Chowk and the 2.3km drain connecting Nithari to Sector 39, among others, said officials. The authority said tenders for some drains have already been issued and the remaining process will be completed shortly. The authority said that the aim is to complete the cleaning of drains across the city by June 30, said officials.

The contractors will be responsible for removing silt, garbage and accumulated waste from drains to ensure the smooth flow of stormwater and reduce the

risk of flooding during heavy rainfall. The work will also include disposal of excavated material, sanitation at work sites, deployment of labour during designated working hours and adherence to safety norms during execution. At present, several arterial stormwater drains across the city are clogged with muck and garbage, severely affecting their carrying capacity ahead of the monsoon season.

In July last year, moderate rainfall triggered severe waterlogging and traffic chaos on a 500-metre stretch in Sector 62 connecting the Delhi-Meerut Expressway and NH-9. Flooded road brought traffic to a near standstill as

commuters waded through submerged streets. Residents and officials had blamed the situation on stormwater flowing in from the adjoining Khoda area, which overwhelmed Noida's drainage infrastructure. In Noida, stormwater drains channel rainwater into larger drainage networks. However, when drains are not cleaned before the monsoon, silt, plastic waste, and construction debris accumulate inside them, reducing their discharge capacity. During heavy rainfall, the blocked drains fail to release water quickly, leading to overflow on roads and inundation in low-lying areas.

Ghaziabad 27/5: Two unidentified suspects allegedly fired multiple shots at a house in Sahibabad's residential area late Monday night, officials said on Tuesday, adding that they have registered a first information report (FIR) in the incident. According to the police, the incident took place around 11.15pm when some unidentified men wearing helmets arrived in Jawahar Park area on a two-wheeler and fired about 8-10 shots at a house owned by a woman, a resident of Shahdara area in Delhi. "About three months ago, the house had been vacated by her tenant following the court's directions. The two men arrived on Monday night and fired multiple

shots, targeting the locked house and fled. Locals alerted the police, and a visiting team recovered 8-10 empty cartridges. We have initiated an investigation into the incident," assistant commissioner of police (Sahibabad) Amit Saxena told HT. "We are investigating all probable angles to the case," ACP added.

An FIR was registered on Tuesday under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections 125 (rash and negligent acts endangering human lives) and 351(2) (criminal intimidation) at the Sahibabad police station following a complaint by the woman's son over the incident, said officials. "The two men on a two-

wheeler were spotted in CCTV footage. The empty cartridges recovered indicate that these were fired from pistols," Yogendra Singh, station house officer (SHO), Sahibabad police station, told to media. Residents said the incident has instilled a sense of fear among them. "Residents are frightened after the incident. Everyone was taken by surprise as so many shots were fired. The suspects also left behind a pamphlet reading 'ab teri baari' in Hindi (now, it's your turn) near the house. We have informed the police and asked them to trace the suspects at the earliest," said Sardar Singh Bhati, former councillor from ward 37 of Shalimar Garden (main).

FIR Warning for Employees Neglecting Census Duty, Greater Noida Administration Issues Final Notice

Greater Noida, 27/5: The Greater Noida administration has taken a strict stance regarding Census 2027 duties and issued a final warning to employees showing negligence in the process. Mukesh Kumar Singh, Charge Officer for the census operation and OSD of the Greater Noida Authority, stated that all employees and enumerators assigned to census work must officially receive and acknowledge their duties by Wednesday evening. He warned that failure to comply would result in FIRs being lodged against the concerned employees at local police stations. Administration Warns Employees Against Negligence According to officials, all personnel appointed for Census 2027 have already undergone training and received the necessary guidelines. However, several employees have yet to begin work in their assigned areas, raising concerns about delays in the census process.

The administration has now given such employees a final deadline until Wednesday evening, after which strict action will be initiated. Census Work Must Be Completed by June 20 The Charge Officer emphasized that the census work is scheduled to be completed by June 20 and described it as a task of national importance. He said negligence at any level would not be tolerated.

Officials also informed residents that if they face

difficulties in contacting their area enumerator, they can reach out to the concerned work circle in-charge, manager, assistant manager, or supervisor for assistance.

Appeal to RWAs and Apartment Associations Meanwhile, Additional CEO of the Greater Noida Authority and Census Nodal Officer Sumit Yadav appealed to Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) and Apartment Owners Associations to cooperate with census officials.

He urged societies and residential sectors to ensure that census workers do not face difficulties while entering premises. After verifying their identity cards and duty letters, enumerators should be granted smooth access so that the work can be completed on time.

Administration Seeks Public Support During Heatwave

Considering the intense summer heat, Sumit Yadav also appealed for social cooperation and requested residents and RWAs to support census staff with drinking water, lemon water, or light refreshments if needed.

He said the census is not merely a government exercise but an important campaign linked to national and public interest. Its success, he added, depends on active public participation and cooperation from citizens.

Noida to Launch Electric Bus Service Across Five Routes from June

Noida, 27/5: The Noida Authority has accelerated preparations to launch electric bus services across the city from June.

The e-buses will operate on five major routes, with trial runs scheduled to begin in the first week of June. Most buses are expected to become operational by June 15. In the first phase, a total of 100 electric buses will be introduced, including 10 double-decker buses. The remaining fleet will consist of 9-metre and 12-metre-long buses. Officials said the buses will run on MP-1, MP-2, MP-3, Zonal Road No. 6, and the Noida-Greater Noida Expressway routes. The Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) will operate the service. Authorities stated that e-rickshaws will be removed from all routes where e-buses operate to encourage commuters to use the bus service. The minimum fare has been fixed at ₹10, while the

maximum fare will be ₹30.

Double-Decker Buses to Connect Key Areas

The double-decker buses will operate from Botanical Garden to Pari Chowk via the Noida-Greater Noida Expressway. The routes will also connect Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, and Jewar Airport. Officials are still discussing monthly pass prices. The bus service is expected to coincide with the start of flight operations at Noida International Airport in Jewar from June 15. Ticket Booking Through Mobile App

Passengers will be able to book tickets through a dedicated mobile app. Tickets can also be purchased directly from conductors onboard the buses. Authorities said buses will be available every 15 minutes on all routes, while five buses will remain on standby. Around 300 employees, including drivers and conductors, will be deployed for

operating the first batch of 100 buses. Focus on Areas with Limited Public Transport

Officials said the bus routes have nearly been finalized, and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with UPSRTC are expected to be signed within the next few days. Priority is being given to areas where public transport services are either limited or unavailable.

The project is expected to benefit nearly 200,000 commuters daily.

Charging Infrastructure at Sector-90 Depot

A modern bus depot is being developed in Sector-90, which will include e-charging points, a service station, and workshops for drivers and conductors. Around 20 charging stations will be installed at the depot, enabling simultaneous charging of up to 50 buses. Four additional charging stations

will also be set up at the Botanical Garden bus stand.

Noida Authority General Manager S.P. Singh said formalities related to the MoU with UPSRTC would be completed this week, after which trial operations would begin on select routes. Proposed Bus Routes

The buses will operate on the following routes:

Botanical Garden to Kisan Chowk and Ek Murti in Greater Noida

Botanical Garden to Noida International Airport, Jewar

Botanical Garden to Sector-62, Noida

Botanical Garden to Phase-2 Noida and Surajpur Collectorate, Greater Noida

Additionally, buses will provide connectivity to Delhi's Sarai Kale Khan, Anand Vihar, Ghaziabad, and ISBT areas.

Ghaziabad to Get a New Grand Entrance: Beautification Work from Tigri Roundabout to NH-9 Underway

Ghaziabad, 27/5: People entering Ghaziabad will soon witness a new and visually appealing gateway to the city as the Municipal Corporation has started large-scale beautification work from Tigri Roundabout to NH-9. The civic body aims to transform the stretch into the city's most attractive entrance corridor. The project, being carried out at an estimated cost of ₹10 crore, includes the redevelopment and beautification of roads, drains, dividers, green belts, and the roundabout area. Mayor Sunita Dayal on Monday inspected the ongoing work along

with senior officials.

Mayor Reviews Development and Beautification Work During the inspection, Mayor Sunita Dayal, accompanied by Chief Engineer (Construction) N.K. Chaudhary, reviewed the progress of the construction and beautification activities. Officials informed that most of the road and drainage work has already been completed, while installation of a statue at the roundabout and other decorative works are still in progress. The Municipal Corporation's goal is to give the entire stretch a modern and attractive

appearance so that people entering Ghaziabad from Noida get a positive first impression of the city. Focus on Green Belt and Plantation Drive The Mayor also visited the green belt area and directed officials to undertake large-scale plantation drives and develop green spaces along the route. Discussions were also held regarding the proper rehabilitation and organization of roadside vendors and hawkers. The Municipal Corporation said efforts are being made to ensure that livelihoods are not affected

while maintaining the city's beautification plans. 'Ghaziabad's Entry Route Will Soon Look Beautiful'

Mayor Sunita Dayal said the area between Tigri Roundabout and NH-9 earlier appeared dirty and neglected, making it an unpleasant marker for people entering Ghaziabad.

She added that the civic body is now working extensively to modernize and beautify the entire stretch. According to her, the route will soon emerge as Ghaziabad's most beautiful entrance and become a new identity for the city.

the evening of May 28, followed by chances of rainfall in the district from May 29 to May 31. Increased cloud activity and rain are expected to gradually reduce temperatures. Weather experts estimate that by June 1, the maximum temperature could fall to around 38 degrees Celsius, providing some relief from the ongoing heatwave. Advisory Issued for Residents The weather department has advised people to avoid going out in direct sunlight between 12 noon and 4 p.m., drink sufficient water, and take special care of children and elderly family members. As weather conditions continue to fluctuate, residents are now eagerly waiting for rain and cooler winds during the final days of May.

Electric Car Catches Fire : 18 Residents Rescued Safely

Sahibabad, 27/5: Panic spread in the Suryanagar area of Sahibabad after an electric car caught fire while charging in the parking area of a four-storey residential building under the Link Road police station limits. The incident occurred around 2 a.m., when smoke quickly filled the building, creating chaos among residents.

According to reports, the car was parked near the staircase in the parking area, blocking the main exit route from the building. As thick smoke spread through the premises, 18 residents trapped inside managed to escape by reaching the terrace and crossing over to the rooftop of a neighboring building. After receiving information about the fire, a fire brigade team rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control within 20 minutes.

Chief Fire Officer Rahul Pal said no casualties were reported in the incident and all residents were evacuated safely. Authorities are currently investigating the cause of the fire.

Noida Temperature Likely to Reach 45°C, Rain Expected to Bring Relief by Month-End

Noida, 27/5: The intense heatwave in May has made life difficult for residents in Noida, with temperatures continuing to rise across the city. On Tuesday, the maximum temperature was recorded at 43 degrees Celsius, while the minimum temperature stood at 26 degrees Celsius.

Strong sunlight and hot winds were felt from early morning, forcing people to avoid stepping out unless absolutely necessary. Markets, roads, and public places witnessed significantly lower movement during the afternoon hours due to the scorching heat.

According to the Meteorological Department, temperatures are expected to rise further on Wednesday. The maximum temperature may cross 45 degrees

Celsius on May 27, while the minimum temperature is likely to remain around 27 degrees Celsius. Heatwave-like conditions are expected throughout the day. The continuous rise in temperature has also increased electricity demand across the city. Residents struggled with hot winds and extreme sunlight during peak afternoon hours.

Rain Likely From May 28 Onwards Despite the severe heat, weather experts have indicated a possible change in conditions toward the end of the month. Meteorologist Dr. A.N. Subhash said a western disturbance is expected to become active from the evening of May 28, which could bring changes in the weather pattern. Light drizzle is likely on

the evening of May 28, followed by chances of rainfall in the district from May 29 to May 31. Increased cloud activity and rain are expected to gradually reduce temperatures. Weather experts estimate that by June 1, the maximum temperature could fall to around 38 degrees Celsius, providing some relief from the ongoing heatwave.

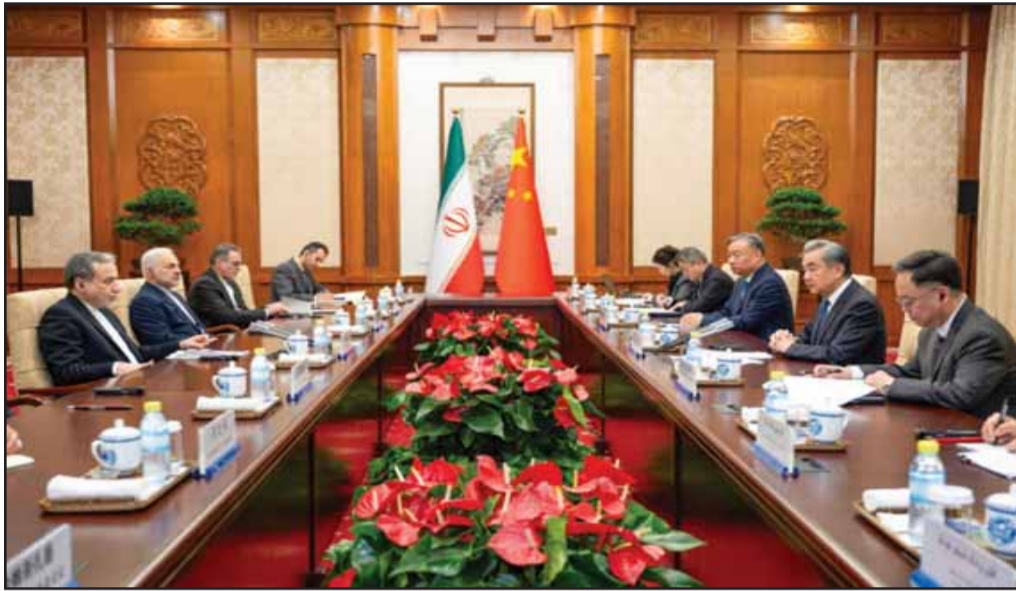
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Govt Spending On Primary Healthcare More Than Doubles To Rs 1.4 Lakh Crore

New Delhi, 27/5: India has witnessed a significant rise in public spending on primary healthcare over the last decade, with government expenditure increasing from Rs 0.5 lakh crore in 2013-14 to Rs 1.4 lakh crore in 2022-23, as per the latest National Health Accounts (NHA) estimates on Wednesday. The NHA estimates, released annually, provide a time-series analysis of actual health expenditure incurred by the government, private sector and other sources. The current estimates for 2022-23 mark the 10th edition in the series that began in 2013-14. According to the report, the steady rise in healthcare spending highlights the government's increasing focus on strengthening primary healthcare services and improving healthcare access across the country. A key component of this effort has been the operationalisation of more than 1.8 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAMs) across India. These centres provide 12 comprehensive primary healthcare service packages covering reproductive and child healthcare, communicable and non-communicable diseases, mental health, palliative care, oral healthcare, ENT services and emergency care. The centres also offer free medicines, diagnostic services, wellness sessions and teleconsultation facilities. To strengthen healthcare delivery further, the government has expanded the essential drug lists available at public healthcare facilities. Under the revised framework, 106 drugs are available free of cost at SHC-AAMs, 172 at PHC-AAMs, 300 at community health centres, 318 at sub-district hospitals and 381 at district hospitals.

China's Potential Role In Iran's Rearmament Amid West Asia Conflict Sparks Global Concern

Beijing, 27/5: China's potential involvement in supplying weapons to Iran amid the ongoing West Asia conflict underscored the complexity of global power dynamics, where economic interdependence often sits uneasily alongside strategic rivalry. The crisis also highlights the need for transparency, accountability, and restraint to prevent further escalation and preserve "fragile" peace amid the tensions, a report has stated. "The global stage in 2026 is witnessing a dramatic escalation of tensions, with the United States, its allies, and China positioned at the heart of a complex geopolitical confrontation. At the centre of this unfolding narrative lies Iran, a nation battered by weeks of conflict and now seeking to rebuild its military capacity," a news report in 'Hamrakura' detailed. "Intelligence reports suggest that China may be preparing to deliver advanced air defence systems to Tehran, a move that could reshape the balance of power in the Middle



East and trigger severe repercussions in global trade and diplomacy," it added. According to the report, the intelligence community has identified China as a potential supplier, suggesting that Beijing may transfer man-portable air defence systems through third countries to conceal their origin. "Such covert operations, if confirmed, would

represent a significant escalation, undermining the fragile truce and complicating diplomatic efforts to stabilise the region," it noted. The report highlighted that the United States has issued unequivocal warnings, stating that any nation supplying weapons to Iran will face immediate economic retaliation. Officials said that a 50 per cent tariff on all goods

exported to the US would be imposed without exceptions. This threat, the report said, is not "merely symbolic" but a powerful tool of economic leverage aimed at deterring foreign intervention in the conflict. "Trade representatives have emphasised that while relations with China remain stable for now, any move

by Beijing to arm Iran would fundamentally alter the dynamic. The imposition of sweeping tariffs could shatter the current trade truce, reigniting economic hostilities between the world's two largest economies," the report mentioned. As global attention grows, it said that the decisions taken in the coming weeks will shape the trajectory of international relations for years ahead. It added that if China proceeds with weapons transfers to Iran, the repercussions could be immediate and severe, prompting economic retaliation and diplomatic strain. If restraint prevails, there remains an opportunity to maintain stability and restore trust. Emphasising the wider implications, the report said, "The crisis is not merely about weapons or tariffs; it is about the future of global governance. The choices made by major powers will determine whether the international system moves toward cooperation or confrontation. In this defining moment, the stakes could not be higher."

Trump Undergoes Annual Medical Exam

Washington, 27/5: US President Donald Trump underwent a routine annual medical and dental examination at Walter Reed National Military Medical Centre on Tuesday amid continued public attention over his health ahead of his 80th birthday next month. Trump stayed at Walter Reed for more than two-and-a-half hours after his motorcade arrived at the Bethesda, Maryland, facility at 8:51 a.m. The motorcade departed at 12:27 p.m., according to White House pool reports. The White House said the appointment involved "routine annual dental and medical assessments" as part of Trump's "regular preventative health care". The visit marked Trump's third scheduled medical appointment at Walter Reed in the past 13 months. The White House said Trump met military personnel and staff during his visit to the medical centre. Trump, who turns 80 on June 14, has faced growing public scrutiny over his health in recent months. The New York Times reported that attention has focused on visible bruising on his hands and swelling in his legs during recent public appearances. White House attributed the bruises to frequent handshakes, while doctors said swelling in Trump's legs was linked to chronic venous insufficiency, a condition that affects blood flow in the veins. The Hill reported that Trump underwent a CT scan during an earlier visit to Walter Reed after his medical team sought to "definitely rule out any cardiovascular issues". According to the report, Trump's physician, Dr Sean Barbabella, said the scan was "perfectly normal and revealed absolutely no abnormalities". Trump takes around 325 milligrams of aspirin daily for "cardiac prevention". Trump told The Wall Street Journal in an earlier interview that aspirin contributed to bruising on his hands. White House doctors are expected to release a summary of the examination, although presidential medical disclosures have historically varied in detail and transparency. Trump has repeatedly pushed back against questions about his age and health and frequently attacked former President Joe Biden over fitness concerns during the 2024 presidential campaign.

Russian Scientists Develop Vaccine Against New Ebola Strain: Moscow

Moscow/Cape, 27/5: Town: Russia has announced that its scientists have developed a new vaccine for the new strain of the Ebola virus linked to the outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Russian Embassy in South Africa took to social media 'X' on Tuesday (local time) and said, "Russian scientists have developed a vaccine against a new Ebola strain. Health Minister Mikhail Murashko announced. According to the Russian scientists, the vaccine may also protect against the rare Bundibugyo strain linked to the outbreak in the DRC." Earlier on May 25, the World Health Organisation (WHO) revealed that a rapidly spreading Ebola outbreak in the DRC has caused 220 suspected deaths, as health officials struggle to catch up with the epidemic. While 101 confirmed cases and 10 confirmed deaths have been recorded, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus had said the true scale is far larger. "There are now more than

900 suspected cases and 220 suspected deaths," Tedros had said at the Virtual Ministerial Briefing on the Bundibugyo Ebola Outbreak on Monday. The outbreak, declared as a public health emergency of international concern on May 17, has also spread to Uganda, which has five confirmed cases and one death. On Tuesday, DR Congo Health Minister Roger Kamba announced that the Ebola outbreak remained at an early stage, but infections and deaths continue to rise. Health authorities have identified around 1,000 suspected cases in affected areas, of which 101 have tested positive. Kamba told a press conference. The outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, which Kamba described as less lethal than the Zaire strain but still dangerous if infections continue to rise. There is currently no approved vaccine or specific treatment for Bundibugyo Ebola. According to the WHO, Ebola disease is a severe, often fatal illness affecting humans and other

primates. The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals (such as fruit bats, porcupines and non-human primates) and then spreads in the human population through direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials (e.g. bedding, clothing) contaminated with these fluids. The average Ebola disease case fatality rate is around 50 per cent. Case fatality rates have varied from 25 to 90 per cent in past outbreaks. The first Ebola disease outbreaks occurred in remote villages in Central Africa, near tropical rainforests. The 2014-2016 Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa was the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak since the virus was first discovered in 1976. There were more cases and deaths in this outbreak than all others combined. It also spread between countries, starting in Guinea, then moving across land borders to Sierra Leone and Liberia.

India's Continues To Strengthen Ties With Caribbean Countries Via High-Level Engagements

Port of Spain, 27/5: India has supported the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries since decolonisation and the early phase of nation-building in the region. The relationship was further strengthened during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Trinidad and Tobago last year, which marked the 180th anniversary of the arrival of indentured Indian immigrants in 1845, a report has stated. Writing for the Caribbean media outlet 'Daily Express', Ralph Maraj, Trinidad and Tobago's Ambassador to CARICOM, said that the India-CARICOM relations gained momentum during External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar's recent visits to Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, where he held talks with the leaders of these nations to enhance the bilateral partnerships. The expert noted that PM Modi became the second Indian Prime Minister to visit the Caribbean in 2024 after a gap of 56 years on a historic visit to Guyana



where key instruments were agreed to advance the comprehensive bilateral ties. Most significantly, Maraj said, the second CARICOM-India summit took place during this visit, co-chaired by PM Modi and Grenada's Prime Minister, Dickon Mitchell, with

participation from all CARICOM leaders. During the summit, Prime Minister Modi presented a seven-pillar framework aimed at strengthening cooperation between India and CARICOM. "In capacity building he announced 1,000 IT scholarships, a proposed

regional forensic centre, expansion of India's technology centre in Belize, and online training for civil servants. Under Agriculture and Food Security, India would share its advancements in agriculture technology and promote millet cultivation for nutrition and sustainability," Maraj detailed. In areas of renewable energy and climate change, PM Modi extended an invitation to CARICOM member states to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Global Biofuel Alliance. Under Innovation and Technology, India would share its digital payment systems (UPI) and eMarketplace model and engender collaboration on 'Stack' infrastructure to support SMEs. Under Ocean Economy and Maritime Security, the Indian PM would position Caricom as "large ocean countries" with potential for marine resource development and pledge support for maritime security against piracy and trafficking." Maraj further highlighted. Furthermore, in medicines and healthcare, the summit envisaged shared affordable healthcare solutions through India's 'Janaushadi' scheme.

Ebola Outbreak Only Beginning, May Take Months To Contain: DRC Health Minister

Kinshasa, 27/5: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is still at the beginning of its latest Ebola outbreak and may need up to six months to contain it, health minister Roger Kamba has said. The number of people showing symptoms compatible with Ebola had risen to around 1,000, while 101 cases had been laboratory-confirmed. Kamba told a press briefing. He put probable deaths at about 220 till late Tuesday evening, with around 17 deaths confirmed by testing, and said about 3,600 contacts were being monitored. The figures remain provisional, the minister said, adding that the government had chosen to communicate the broadest possible count of suspected cases while investigations and laboratory confirmation continue. "We are still at the beginning of an epidemic," Kamba said. Xinhua news agency reported. The outbreak has so far affected three provinces: Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. There were no confirmed cases outside the three eastern provinces, despite alerts from other parts of the country, including the capital Kinshasa, he said. In Ituri, the mining town of

Mongbwalu remains the epicenter, the minister said. The outbreak, declared on May 15, the 17th in the country since 1976, is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus, a rarer form of the disease that has complicated early detection. Kamba said that Bundibugyo is less visibly dramatic in its early phase than the Zaire strain, which has caused many of the DRC's previous Ebola outbreaks. Early symptoms, he said, may resemble malaria, including fever, vomiting and diarrhea, while hemorrhagic signs can appear late or sometimes not at all. There is no licensed vaccine or specific approved treatment for Bundibugyo virus disease, and supportive care, including rehydration, treatment of respiratory distress and management of anemia, remains the main clinical response, Kamba said. The WHO, in its latest rapid risk assessment, said the outbreak posed a "very high" risk at the national level and a "high" risk at the regional level, while the global risk remained "low." The assessment cited rapid geographic expansion, high mobility, insecurity, healthcare worker infections, community deaths and



the absence of a licensed Bundibugyo vaccine or specific therapeutics. Kamba said authorities were deploying diagnostic capacity closer to affected and at-risk areas, including mobile laboratories and additional testing supplies. About 2,000 test kits were being sent to the field, with another 4,000 expected to follow, he said. The minister said that the "patient zero" has not yet been identified, adding that authorities were relying on surveillance, testing, isolation,

contact tracing, community engagement and safe burials to contain transmission. The DRC's response plan is being prepared for a period of four to six months, given the scale of the outbreak, Kamba said. "Considering that this is a major epidemic, we may need six months to end it." Beyond medical logistics, community resistance and insecurity are major obstacles. Kamba cited attacks on Ebola facilities in Rwampara and Mongbwalu, saying some

residents believed they had the right to retrieve bodies and bury them according to local practices. He warned that touching patients or corpses could spread the virus, and said misinformation, including claims that the disease was "mystical" or fabricated, had hindered the response. Risk communication, he said, must rely more heavily on local leaders, religious figures, community health workers and trusted local voices rather than officials arriving from

Kinshasa. The government plans to recruit 60,000 community health workers nationwide from July to strengthen disease surveillance and health education, the minister said. Access to rebel-held areas has become another major concern. Asked about the response in Goma and Bukavu, two major cities with confirmed cases reported that are under the control of the March 23 Movement (M23) rebel group, Kamba said the issue was not only technical but also political and logistical. On Saturday, the DRC government suspended civilian passenger flights to and from Bunia, the capital of Ituri Province and the epicenter of the outbreak, while keeping humanitarian flights in operation. Kamba said the temporary suspension of civilian flights at Bunia airport should not be seen as a border closure. The airport, he said, is under renovation and authorities need to ensure that border health procedures for arriving and departing passengers are properly arranged. "That is why, temporarily, we decided to keep humanitarian flights and suspend civilian flights," he said, adding that the measure would be lifted

"very quickly." In a related development, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) said Monday that international air services remain safe amid the outbreak, but it urged governments, airlines, airports and health authorities to strictly follow WHO guidance. ICAO said that Ebola does not spread through casual contact or through the air, but through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person. The agency said aviation-related measures should be risk-based and evidence-informed, with a focus on exit screening in affected areas rather than broad travel or trade restrictions. The WHO has advised countries not to close borders or impose restrictions on international travel and trade, while recommending that affected countries prevent confirmed cases and contacts from traveling unless the movement is part of an appropriate medical evacuation. For DRC authorities, the immediate priority remains better response on the ground: testing faster, isolating cases earlier, tracing thousands of contacts and rebuilding trust in communities already strained by years of conflict.

JSW Paints unveils its protection-led campaign with JSW Halo featuring Advanced Defense™

Mumbai, 27/5(DMS): JSW Paints today unveiled its new campaign for JSW Halo, its luxury paint portfolio powered by Advanced Defense™ technology. The launch signals the brand's evolving vision for modern homes - from paints that not only beautify homes but also actively protect them, enabling consumers to live more freely and confidently.

Today's homes are more dynamic than ever - spaces that constantly adapt to work, family, celebrations and self-expression. Consumers today seek solutions that not only elevate aesthetics but also protect their homes from germs, stains, dirt and everyday wear.

Built on this insight, JSW Paints introduces its new protection-led platform, "Suraksha ke Sang Jiyo Apne Rang," reimagining paint as an invisible enabler that empowers people to live freely within their homes.



At the heart of the platform is JSW Halo with Advanced Defense™ technology, combining luxury aesthetics with protection against 40 different types of germs to help create healthier, more beautiful living spaces. By seamlessly blending beautification with protection, JSW Halo redefines the role of paint for the modern Indian home.

The campaign film captures this philosophy through intimate, playful and beautifully imperfect moments of everyday life.

Speaking on the launch, Mr. Rohit Talwar, CMO, JSW Decorative Paints, said: "People want to live freely in their homes without constantly worrying about maintaining them. JSW Halo with Advanced Defense™ transforms paint from being a passive backdrop into an active enabler of everyday living. This campaign reframes protection as a source of confidence - empowering more expressive, carefree and uninhibited living." Russell Barrett Chief Creative Experience Officer

- TBWA Lintas said "Most paint brands talk about walls. We chose to talk about the people between them. That's the disruption. When you feel truly safe, you let your guard down. While life gets messy, playful and gloriously imperfect, JSW Paints keeps its guard up. Protecting homes from germs, fading, scuffs and everyday chaos."

With this launch, JSW Paints is redefining what paint means in consumers' lives, moving beyond aesthetics to create solutions that beautify, protect and enable people to live life to the fullest. Through JSW Halo and its wider protection-led portfolio, the brand is shaping a more progressive and future-ready narrative for the category. Timed with the Indian Premier League season, the integrated campaign will be amplified across television, digital and social platforms to drive strong consumer visibility and engagement.

BC Jindal Group's Jindal (India) Limited Completes Rs 1,500-Crore Capex Investment in West Bengal

New Delhi, 27/5(DMS): Jindal (India) Limited, part of the BC Jindal Group and one of the leading downstream steel products manufacturers in the country, today announced the successful commissioning of its new state-of-the-art high-speed continuous Colour Coating Line (CCL) at its Ranihati manufacturing complex in Howrah district, West Bengal. This achievement follows a series of monumental operational strides. Recently, Jindal (India) Ltd commissioned a state-of-the-art Galvanizing Coating line, cold rolling mill, and Pickling facility in February 2026. With this major milestone, Jindal (India) Ltd has successfully completed its ambitious Rs 1,500-crore capex investment in West Bengal. As part of its overall expansion plan, BC Jindal Group, led by Mr. Shyam Sunder Jindal, Promoter, BC Jindal Group, had inked a supply agreement with John Cockerill India in FY25 for the cutting-edge Colour Coating Line which is expected to deliver an output



of 2,75,000 tons per annum. In FY27, the company's revenue is projected to surge by 75 per cent as the plant's production capacity will reach a dominant 60,000 tons per month, recording a jump of 76 per cent. "The commissioning of this new line, a part of our larger expansion strategy, mirrors our unwavering commitment to cater to India's evolving infrastructure needs. A market leader in India's downstream steel products manufacturing space, JIL, with this new line, will transition into a high-volume player while ensuring it continues to deliver premium products through high-

quality manufacturing", said a Jindal (India) Limited spokesperson. The colour coating line includes a multi-stage cleaning section, tension leveller, chemical coating, drying and paint coaters with curing ovens with RTO, an inspection station, and a cold laminator. Equipped with latest technology, the CCL can handle wide range of thickness and width of steel strips and produce a variety of coated products with Polyester, RMP, SMP, Epoxy, PVC, PU, PVDF and Teflon paint coating with high-speed continuous processing capabilities.

JSW Infrastructure announces Q4 and FY2026 results

Mumbai, 27/5(DMS): JSW Infrastructure Limited (the "Company"), a part of the JSW Group and India's second-largest private commercial port operator, today announced its results for the fourth quarter and year ended 31st March 2026. During the quarter, the Company handled cargo volumes of 31.6 million tonnes which is higher by 1% over the last year. The volume increase was mainly due to strong performance at South West Port, Dharamtar Port and Jaigarh Port on the back of higher volumes of Anchor customer, along with contributions from interim operations at the Tuticorin Terminal and the JNPA Liquid Terminal. This growth was partly offset by lower volumes at the Fujairah facility due to disruptions arising from the ongoing Middle East conflict, as well as cargo deferments at Indian operations, particularly during the month of March, driven by lower availability of vessel and higher freight cost. However, the situation has improved significantly from April 2026 onwards, with vessel availability normalising and operations stabilising across our Ports and Terminals. Increase



de-realisation along with higher ancillary services like storage & transportation offered to domestic customers, growth in cargo volumes and INR depreciation led to a 12% year on year increase in port segment operational revenue, rising from ₹1,152 crore in Q4 FY2025 to ₹1,295 crore in Q4 FY2026. Operational EBITDA increased by 13% to ₹705 crore, compared to ₹626 crore in the corresponding quarter last year. Navkar Corporation delivered strong operational and financial performance in Q4

FY2026. Total EXIM cargo volumes increased to 86,000 TEUs, reflecting a robust 14% year-on-year growth. Domestic cargo volumes rose sharply to 427,000 metric tonnes, a significant 56% increase compared to the same period last year. The increase in port volumes along with the strong performance of Navkar Corporation's and consolidation of newly acquired rail rakes business, resulted in a 19% increase in consolidated operational revenue, rising from ₹1,283 crore in Q4 FY2025 to ₹1,522 crore in Q4 FY2026.

SBI General Insurance Spotlights Need for Comprehensive Health Cover Amid Rising Medical Costs

Mumbai, 27/5(DMS): SBI General Insurance, one of India's leading general insurance companies, has announced a new film featuring Pankaj Tripathi in continuation of its campaign 'Chuniye Bharosa, Apno Sa'. The film highlights the growing need for health insurance in our daily lives and in these uncertain times. India is witnessing a steady rise in lifestyle-related health concerns and medical inflation, increasing the financial burden on households during emergencies. Recent government data released through the National Statistical Office's (NSO) 80th round health survey showed that an average hospitalisation in the country now leads to an out-of-pocket expenditure of over ₹34,000 for households, underlining the significant financial burden medical emergencies can create for families despite growing health insurance penetration. Featuring Pankaj Tripathi, the film is rooted in the realities of everyday life. It vividly reflects the daily hustle, long commutes, demanding workdays, and sacrifices people make to secure a better future for their families. Through an emotional and



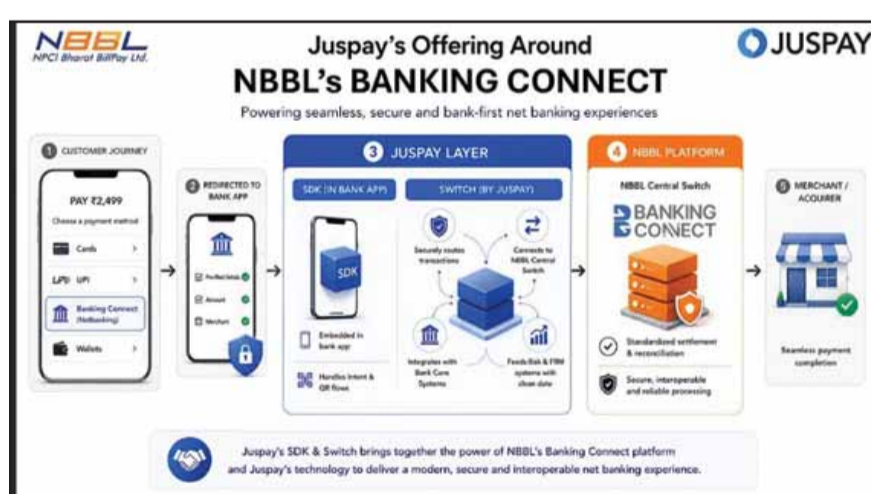
relatable narrative, the film reminds viewers that while they work tirelessly for their loved ones, they often overlook a key priority protecting the health and financial well-being of their families and securing the future of those who matter most. The campaign reinforces the importance of choosing trusted and adequate health insurance support during uncertain times. Speaking on this, Rathin Lahiri, Head - Marketing & CSR, SBI General Insurance said, "Healthcare preparedness today is about more than just owning an insurance policy. For salaried individuals with family responsibilities, setting aside at least 2% of annual income towards insurance can be a

prudent step to address changing health needs and rising medical costs. Through our Chuniye Bharosa, Apno Sa campaign, featuring Pankaj Tripathi as brand ambassador, we wanted to reflect the everyday efforts people make for their loved ones while encouraging a more proactive approach to protecting their family's health and financial well-being. The campaign underscores the importance of choosing coverage that genuinely supports families during uncertain times." Health insurance today is evolving beyond emergency financial support to become an important pillar of long-term healthcare and financial preparedness for families. Planning ahead through

adequate health coverage can often help families navigate medical uncertainties more confidently while reducing financial strain during emergencies. SBI General Insurance continues to offer customer-centric health insurance solutions designed to support individuals and families with comprehensive coverage and flexible benefits. Its recently launched Health Alpha plan offers customisable coverage options, cashless hospitalisation across an extensive hospital network, preventive healthcare benefits, coverage for modern treatments, and seamless claims assistance, helping customers choose protection suited to their evolving healthcare needs.

NBBL's Banking Connect Enhanced by Juspay's Switch and SDK to Simplify Bank Integration

Mumbai, 27/5(DMS): NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited (NBBL), a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), in partnership with Juspay, has introduced a Switch for Banking Connect, simplifying bank integrations with the platform. The new capability is designed to make app-based net banking journeys faster, easier, and more secure. The Switch, along with a software developer kit (SDK), will deliver key partner level enhancements, including clean data delivery for risk and fraud systems, and seamless routing to the NBBL's Banking Connect Central Switch. This development demonstrates the growing potential of Banking Connect to serve as a single, interoperable layer that supports standardised, bank-first net banking workflows. It also highlights how partners can build on the platform's foundational infrastructure to create scalable, value-added solutions for the wider ecosystem. Noopur Chaturvedi, MD & CEO, NBBL, said, "Banking Connect was envisioned as a solution that offers consumers



an upgraded net banking experience that is refined and intuitive. Moreover, its open architecture provides banks and partners a platform to build on and innovate with ease. Juspay's SDK and Switch layer showcase how industry partners can leverage Banking Connect to deliver unified and bank-first net banking journeys. We believe such co-creation efforts will accelerate the adoption of modern, app-based payment experiences and further strengthen Banking Connect as a trusted and

future-ready option for millions of consumers. "Sheetal Lalwani, COO & Co-founder, Juspay, said "Banking Connect is transforming the way banks approach net banking integrations, and we are proud to be a part of this evolution. This collaboration with NBBL reflects our shared commitment to deliver seamless & secure customer journeys, backed a standardised industry protocol. With the Switch, our goal is to create a consistent, reliable, and app-first net banking experience for the

entire ecosystem. Banking Connect aims to address long-standing challenges in net banking such as fragmented integrations across banks, non-uniform settlement and reconciliation processes, legacy redirect-based web flows, and limited control over customer experience. Through standardisation, partner-led innovation, and an interoperable architecture, the platform provides a simplified integration model that is scalable and aligned with the expectations of a modern net banking ecosystem. By enabling ecosystem-led innovation these advancements on top of Banking Connect, NBBL is encouraging broader ecosystem adoption and further strengthening net banking as a modern and future ready payment option.

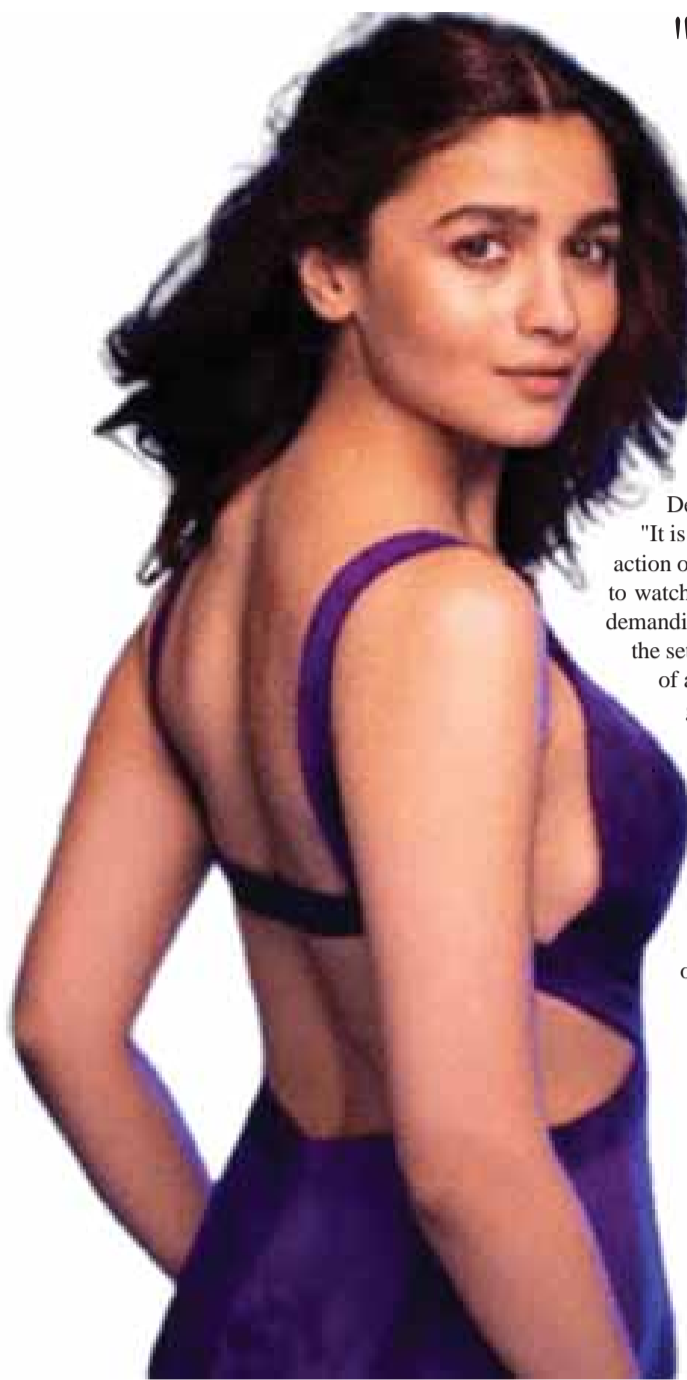
Sensex, Nifty Slip Amid Weakness In Banking Stocks

Mumbai, 27/5: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty closed lower in a volatile trading session on Wednesday as weakness in banking and financial stocks, coupled with geopolitical uncertainties surrounding the US-Iran situation, kept investors cautious. The 30-share Sensex slipped 141.90 points, or 0.19 per cent, to settle at 75,867.80. The index had opened on a positive note but lost momentum as the day progressed. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that the 23,800 region remains an important immediate support zone, and a decisive break below this area could extend weakness toward the 23,600-23,500 levels. "On the upside, the 24,000-24,100 range continues to act as a strong resistance band, and only a sustained move above this zone could revive bullish momentum toward the 24,200 levels," an analyst stated. Among the top losers on the Nifty were Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, HDFC Bank and HDFC Life Insurance, with financial stocks remaining under pressure throughout the session. On the gaining side, Power Grid Corporation of India, Eternal



and NTPC rose more than 2 per cent each among Sensex constituents. Other notable gainers included Tata Steel, IndiGo, Maruti Suzuki, Titan Company and Asian Paints. The broader Nifty also closed marginally lower, falling 6.55 points, or 0.03 per cent, to end at 23,907.15. Market sentiment remained subdued as investors monitored developments related to the United States and Iran. Reports of US strikes in southern Iran on Tuesday, despite ongoing negotiations and expectations of a possible deal between Washington and

Tehran, added to concerns over the fragile geopolitical environment. In the broader market, midcap and smallcap stocks outperformed the benchmark indices. The Nifty MidCap index settled 0.42 per cent higher, while the Nifty SmallCap index gained 0.15 per cent. Sectorally, the Nifty Financial Services, Nifty Bank and Nifty Private Bank indices were among the worst performers. In contrast, the Nifty Media, Nifty Metal and Nifty Auto indices ended higher, supported by buying interest in select stocks.



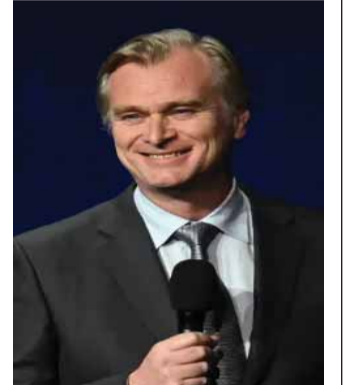
"She comes to the set completely prepared": Bobby Deol praises Alia Bhatt's dedication in spy thriller 'Alpha'

Bollywood actor Bobby Deol shared that he thoroughly enjoyed shooting for Alpha and had a great experience working alongside Alia Bhatt. Speaking about the film, Bobby said he had always wanted to collaborate with Alia and her husband, actor Ranbir Kapoor. "I'm very fond of Ranbir and Alia, and I always wanted to work with both of them. With Ranbir, I did 'Animal', and now with Alia, I have now done 'Alpha'. I had the best time working with both of them," Bobby said in a statement. Produced by Aditya Chopra under the banner of Yash Raj Films, 'Alpha' stars Alia Bhatt and Sharvari in lead roles, with Bobby Deol and Anil Kapoor also featuring in pivotal parts. Calling Alpha a refreshing project, he added, "It is quite amazing that we are making an action film in India, like 'Alpha', featuring two girls doing action on screen. I like 'Alpha' a lot because it is new, it is refreshing, and a new visual for the audience to watch in theatres." The actor also praised Alia Bhatt's dedication and preparation for the physically demanding role. "Alia is one of the most hardworking and sincere actors I've worked with. She comes to the set completely prepared, deeply invested in every scene," Deol said. "She has never done this kind of action before, and I was amazed seeing how prepared she was for the shoot. I could see she was giving her all because action is hard to pull off, and she went for it," Bobby added. Speaking about the film's action design, Bobby credited producer Aditya Chopra and director Shiv Rawail for aiming to create grounded and realistic action sequences. "Adi and the director Shiv Rawail had a clear vision that action should look real and raw. So, it was a tough shoot for both of us, and I'm glad we have a film that everyone should sit back, relax, and hopefully enjoy thoroughly," he said. The film is directed by Shiv Rawail, who previously directed the series 'The Railway Men.' It is produced by Aditya Chopra under the banner of Yash Raj Films. 'Alpha' marks the sixth installment in the highly successful YRF Spy Universe, which already boasts blockbusters such as 'Ek Tha Tiger,' 'Tiger Zinda Hai,' 'War,' and 'Pathaan.' Alpha is set to release in theatres on July 10, 2026 worldwide.



Toronto International Film Festival announces retrospective on filmmaker Christopher Nolan

The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) is set to honour Oscar-winning filmmaker Christopher Nolan with a major career retrospective this summer, according to The Hollywood Reporter. TIFF will screen 12 of Nolan's feature films at its Lightbox theatres during July and August as part of the "Christopher Nolan: Grand Designs" programme, celebrating the filmmaker's body of work and cinematic legacy. The retrospective will open with Tenet on July 9 and conclude with a 70mm screening of Dunkirk on August 20, highlighting Nolan's signature large-format storytelling style and technical innovation. The showcase will feature several of Nolan's most acclaimed films, including Oppenheimer, Interstellar, Inception, Memento, The Prestige and Insomnia, offering audiences a wide-ranging look at his evolution as a filmmaker. Nolan's celebrated Batman trilogy -- Batman Begins, The Dark Knight and The Dark Knight Rises -- will also be screened during the event. The retrospective also marks a full-circle moment for Nolan, who first brought his directorial debut 'Following' to Toronto in 1998 before the film gained recognition on the festival circuit, according to The Hollywood Reporter. TIFF's Nolan retrospective coincides with the release of the filmmaker's next highly anticipated feature, The Odyssey, which is slated to hit theatres on July 17. Based on Odyssey, the film stars Matt Damon as Odysseus, the Greek king of Ithaca, who embarks on a perilous journey home following the Trojan War in an attempt to reunite with his wife Penelope. The story follows Odysseus' decade-long journey, filled with divine interventions and dangerous encounters, while back home, Penelope and their son Telemachus struggle against aggressive suitors vying for the throne, according to The Hollywood Reporter. The film also features an ensemble cast including Zendaya, Anne Hathaway, Tom Holland, Charlize Theron, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong'o, Benny Safdie, Mia Goth, Elliot Page, Samantha Morton, Ryan Hurst and Travis Scott.



SPORTS

Nihal Sarin Qualifies For Esports World Cup 2026 Chess Event

Mumbai, 27/5: Indian Grandmaster Nihal Sarin, representing S8UL Esports, has officially qualified for the Chess main event at the Esports World Cup (EWC) 2026 through the Champions Chess Tour (CCT) 2025-2026 Leaderboard. He joined teammate Aravindh Chithambaram as one of the only two Indian players to qualify for the prestigious tournament so far. The CCT 2025-26 season featured two major events, the Speed Chess Championship (SCC) 2025 and Chess.com Open (CCO) 2026. The top three players from both tournaments secured direct qualification to the EWC, while players finishing between fifth and ninth in SCC, along with the remaining participants in CCO, earned points toward the CCT Leaderboard based on their performances. In addition to these events, players also accumulated points through the Titled Tuesday Grand Prix (TTGP) circuit, which was divided into Autumn, Winter, and Spring splits featuring 13 Titled Tuesday tournaments



each. Players earned leaderboard points in every Titled Tuesday event across the season. At the end of the season, the top nine players in the final CCT Leaderboard standings, excluding already-qualified players, secured their spots at EWC 2026. Nihal narrowly missed out on direct qualification through the CCO after finishing fourth, just one spot away from qualification, but still secured 100 crucial leaderboard points from the event. He further added points through consistent performances across the TTGP circuit, including one point in the Autumn Split and four points in the Winter Split. A standout second-place finish in the Spring Split ultimately helped him accumulate 34 points and finish with a total of 139 points in the standings to secure his berth at the EWC 2026. Last year, Nihal was one of only two Indians representing the country at the EWC 2025 after qualifying through the Last Chance Qualifier (LCQ). He went on to reach the quarterfinals before falling to eventual champion Magnus Carlsen.

Bangladesh Players Climb ICC Test Rankings After 2-0 Sweep Against Pakistan

Dubai, 27/5: Bangladesh players made significant progress in the latest ICC Men's Test Player Rankings after their impressive 2-0 series victory over Pakistan in home series, which was also part of the World Test Championship. Veteran batter Mushfiqur Rahim was one of the biggest gainers after scoring a series-best 259 runs in four innings. The experienced right-hander climbed 10 places to joint 16th in the ICC Test batting rankings. Fellow Bangladesh batter Litton Das also enjoyed a strong rise, moving up 14 spots to 24th after collecting 239 runs during the series. Bangladesh bowlers also benefited from the series win. Left-



arm spinner Taijul Islam climbed two places to 11th in the ICC Test bowling rankings and also achieved a new career-best rating. Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz moved up two spots to 25th, while fast bowler Nahid Rana jumped 10 places to 54th. Taijul also gained three spots in the ICC Test all-rounder rankings to move to 29th.

Despite the series defeat, Pakistan received some positive news as pacer Khuram Shahzad returned to the ICC Test bowling rankings in 49th position following his comeback appearance in the second Test in Sylhet. There were also notable changes in the ODI rankings after the completion of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 tri-series featuring Nepal, the United States and Scotland. Nepal, who won three matches during the tri-series, saw wicketkeeper-batter Aasif Sheikh rise five spots to joint 81st in the ODI batting rankings, while all-rounder Dipendra Singh Airee moved up eight places to joint 91st.

Trailer of Shilpa Shetty-hosted show 'Maa Hai Na' out now

Actor Shilpa Shetty will be seen donning a host hat for the show 'Maa Hai Na'. On Tuesday, the show's trailer was unveiled. The makers have described the show as a "non-fiction original comedy cooking show pairs six Gen Zs with their moms for an unpredictable, high-energy kitchen showdown." With Shilpa Shetty Kundra as the host, "expect comedy, chaos, emotional throwbacks, and plenty of pressure as these contestants step out of their comfort zones." On being a part of the show, Shilpa, in a press note, said, "The moment I watched the trailer of Maa Hai Na, it instantly reminded me of how emotional and chaotic kitchens can be in every Indian family. Maa Hai Na is not just about cooking; it's about those little moments between a mother and child that we often take for granted. The show has laughter, pressure, nostalgia, and genuine emotions that surprised me, and I love how beautifully it captures the madness and magic of that relationship." She added, "A complete show packed with great energy, entertainment and emotion. What I didn't expect at all was that in all the humour we found emotions that were heartwarming and just like we believe in every Indian home, 'Maa hai Na ... toh Sab possible hai !!'"

