

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Malaysia, Tamil Nadu share deep ties: PM Ibrahim congratulates new CM Vijay

KUALA LUMPUR, May 12: Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Tuesday hailed the "deep" ties between his country and Tamil Nadu, as he congratulated actor-turned-politician Chandrasekar Joseph Vijay on becoming the southern Indian state's new chief minister.

In a post on X, Ibrahim said for many years, Vijay's "adoring fans watched him defeat corrupt politicians and assorted villains within three hours, usually after a short interval".

"The people of Tamil



Nadu have now entrusted far greater than any role Vijay with a responsibility performed on screen."

Ibrahim congratulated his "friend" on his election to the post and said, "Oru Viral Puratchi – the 'one-finger revolution' – is now on the cusp of creating history." "Malaysia and Tamil Nadu share deep historical, cultural and people-to-people ties across generations. I look forward to working closely with Chief Minister Vijay in the years ahead," he said.

The 51-year-old Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) founder-chief was sworn in as the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on Sunday. (PTI)

Pakistan calls report on Iranian aircraft parked at airbase 'misleading'

ISLAMABAD, MAY 12: Pakistan on Tuesday rejected as "misleading" a US media report that claimed Islamabad allowed Iranian military aircraft to park on its airfield to potentially shield them from American airstrikes, while playing the role of mediator between the two sides.

In a statement, the Foreign Office said that the Iranian aircraft currently parked in the country arrived during the ceasefire period following the initial round of US-Iran peace talks and bears "no linkage" to any military contingency or preservation arrangement.

CBS News reported that days after US President Donald Trump announced the ceasefire with Iran in early April, Tehran sent multiple aircraft to the Nur Khan Airbase near Rawalpindi. News Archive Access

"Among the military hardware was an Iranian Air Force RC-130, a reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering variant of the Lockheed C-130 Hercules tactical transport aircraft," the report claimed.

In its statement, the Foreign Office categorically rejected the CBS News report as "misleading and sensationalised."

"Such speculative narratives appear aimed at undermining ongoing efforts for regional stability and peace,"



it said. "Following the ceasefire and during the initial round of the Islamabad Talks, a number of aircraft from Iran and the US arrived in Pakistan to facilitate the movement of diplomatic personnel, security teams and administrative staff associated with the talks process," it said.

The FO said that some aircraft and support personnel remained temporarily in Pakistan in "anticipation of subsequent rounds of engagement."

"Although formal negotiations have not yet resumed, senior-level diplomatic exchanges have continued. In this context, visits by the Iranian foreign minister to Islamabad were facilitated

through the existing logistical and administrative arrangements," it said.

"The Iranian aircraft currently parked in Pakistan arrived during the ceasefire period and bears no linkage whatsoever to any military contingency or preservation arrangement. Assertions suggesting otherwise are speculative, misleading, and entirely detached from the factual context," the FO said.

"Pakistan has consistently acted as an impartial, constructive, and responsible facilitator in support of dialogue and de-escalation. In line with this role, Pakistan has extended routine logistical and administrative support where required, while maintaining full transparency and regular communication with all relevant parties," it said.

"Pakistan remains committed to supporting all sincere efforts aimed at promoting dialogue, reducing tensions, and advancing regional and global peace, stability, and security," it added.

Reacting to the CBS report, US Republican Senator Lindsey Graham called for a complete reevaluation of Pakistan's role as a mediator to end the US-Iran war that broke out on February 28 and has been put on pause since April 8.

The report comes days after Pakistan confirmed that it received the Iranian proposals for peace, which, as a mediator, it shared with the US side. (PTI)

Pakistan extends countrywide austerity drive after US, Iran fail to strike deal

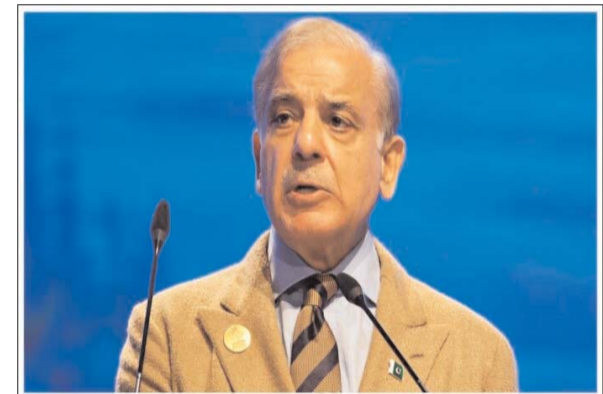
ISLAMABAD, MAY 12: Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has extended the countrywide austerity drive till June 13 in the wake of uncertainty caused by the US and Iran's failure to strike a deal to end the conflict in West Asia amid a fragile ceasefire.

The Government announced several measures on March 9 following the disruption in the energy supplies after the US and Israel launched an attack against Iran on February 28.

The austerity measures were initially announced for two months.

According to a notification issued by the Cabinet Division of the Government on Monday, it has been decided to extend the same for more than a month after US President Donald Trump on Sunday rejected Iran's proposal to end the months-long war, calling it "totally unacceptable."

"The prime minister, on consideration of the recom-



mendations of the committee for monitoring and implementation of fuel conservation and additional austerity measures, has been pleased to extend the applicability of the following additional austerity measures up till 13th June, 2026, with immediate effect," it read.

Among the key measures, the Government had announced a 50 per cent reduction in fuel allowance for official vehicles, with the exemption of operational vehicles such as ambulances and public buses.

Other steps included the

grounding of 60 per cent of official vehicles and a complete ban on foreign visits, excluding those as specified the last time, which were deemed essential for the country's interests.

Pakistan is highly dependent on oil supplies from West Asia, and the Iran war choked the key supply line for the country, making it impossible to run the national affairs as per routine.

Despite the austerity drive in place, Pakistan had to jack up the prices of fuel, making it one of the costliest countries for petroleum prod-

ucts. A

The ongoing conflict, triggered by the US and Israel's joint strikes on Iran and Tehran's subsequent retaliation, has remained under a ceasefire since April 8. A

Islamabad hosted one round of direct talks between Iran and the US on April 11, but the two sides failed to reach an agreement.

The Strait of Hormuz and Iran's nuclear enrichment programme remain key sticking points in the negotiations.

On April 21, Trump indefinitely extended the ceasefire beyond its two-week deadline to allow more time for negotiations with Tehran.

The latest developments come at a time when the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have reported drone incursions into their airspace, while a drone strike caused a minor fire aboard a commercial vessel near Qatar's coast, testing the ceasefire. (PTI)

In BJP-EC's 'Chor Bazaar', Bigger The Theft, Bigger The Reward: Rahul's Dig At WB Govt Appointments

NEW DELHI, MAY 12: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday took a swipe at the appointments of erstwhile chief election officer Manoj Agarwal as the new West Bengal chief secretary and Subrata Gupta as the chief advisor to Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, saying that in the BJP-EC "chor bazaar", the bigger the theft, the bigger the reward.

The Congress has claimed that the appointments reflected the "brazen collusion and connivance" between the Election Commission and the BJP.

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "In the BJP-EC's 'chor bazaar' the bigger the theft, the bigger the reward."

Congress general secretary in charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh, had said the BJP-led West Bengal government has appointed the erstwhile chief election officer Agarwal, a



1990-batch IAS officer responsible for overseeing the recent Assembly elections in the state, as the new chief secretary.

Similarly, Gupta, also a 1990-batch IAS officer who oversaw the SIR deletions in Bengal as the special roll observer, has been appointed the chief advisor to the Chief Minister, Ramesh pointed

out. "These appointments reflect the brazen collusion and connivance between the ECI and the BJP. There is no longer even an attempt to keep the collusion discrete or concealed," Ramesh said.

The appointments are a testimony that the ECI was not impartial and acted exclusively to benefit the BJP,

he alleged. An entire state went to the election with 27 lakh people being debarred from voting. This was tactfully executed by the ECI to create an electoral advantage for the BJP, Ramesh said.

Agarwal, a West Bengal cadre officer, helmed the EC-mandated Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bengal in the run-up to the Assembly polls, in which around 91 lakh voters were removed from the voter list.

The West Bengal government on Sunday carried out a bureaucratic reshuffle, appointing two IAS officers and seven WBCS (executive) officers in the chief minister's office (CMO), according to official notifications.

Gupta was appointed advisor to the chief minister, hours after he was sworn in, while Shantanu Bala was named his private secretary. (Agencies)

Trump seriously considering resuming hostilities in Middle East: Reports

MOSCOW, MAY 12: US President Donald Trump is seriously considering resuming hostilities in the Middle East, CNN reported citing presidential aides.

Earlier, after a conversation with Trump, Fox News stated that the White House was considering resuming Operation Project Freedom to restore shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, with an expanded military role.

Trump is increasingly frustrated with Iran's stance in the negotiations to resolve the conflict, and he is now more seriously considering resuming large-scale military operations than he has in recent weeks, CNN said.

Sources told the channel that Trump was losing patience with the Strait of Hormuz remaining closed and also believed there was a rift within the Iranian leadership



preventing them from making significant concessions on the nuclear issue. According to sources, several groups have now emerged within the US administration, some of which advocate a forceful approach, proposing continued targeted bombing of

Iran to weaken Tehran's position, with others continuing to insist on diplomatic means to resolve the conflict.

Pakistan's position as a mediator in the US-Iran negotiations remains a separate issue for the US, the broadcaster noted. Citing

sources, the channel explains that the US government is unclear how clearly Islamabad is communicating Washington's position to Tehran, as well as how objectively it is communicating Iran's viewpoint.

The direction the US will take in the Middle East conflict is still unclear, and a decision is unlikely to be made before Trump's scheduled visit to China from May 13 to 15, CNN reported citing informed sources.

On February 28, the US and Israel began striking targets in Iran, killing more than 3,000 people. Washington and Tehran declared a ceasefire on April 8. The subsequent talks in Islamabad ended without result, with no announcement of a resumption of hostilities, but the United States began a blockade of Iranian ports.

PM Modi's appeal indicates deepening economic crisis: Mayawati

LUCKNOW, MAY 12: Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Tuesday said the prime minister's austerity appeal proves that the crisis confronting India is not limited merely to petroleum products, but it is a broader economic crisis set to deepen.

In a post on X, Mayawati referred to the appeal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to exercise restraint amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia and highlighted particularly the concerns regarding the energy crisis and foreign exchange reserves.

"This proves that the crisis confronting India is not limited merely to petroleum products such as petrol, diesel, and cooking gas; rather, an economic crisis is also set to deepen," she said.

She added that the situation is already impacting lives of millions of Indians, and there are grave apprehensions that it will persist.



"In other words, at a time when nearly 100 crore citizens of the country, having already faced the severe blow of the COVID-19 era, are struggling even to secure their daily livelihood, there is nothing left of any significance to lose or to be more restrained about. Under these circumstances, the central and state governments should take proactive measures to provide some relief and support to these poor and hardworking families," Mayawati said.

such measures would be in the interest of both people and the nation — reflecting the prevailing sentiment among the public.

Emphasising that the Centre is trying to shield people from the adverse impact of the conflict in West Asia, Modi on Sunday had called for judicious use of fuel, postponement of gold purchases and foreign travel, among other measures, to strengthen the economy.

Addressing a rally organised by the Telangana BJP in

Hyderabad, he suggested reducing petrol and diesel consumption, using metro rail services in cities, carpooling, increased use of electric vehicles (EVs), utilising railway services for parcel movement and working from home to conserve foreign exchange amid the crisis in West Asia.

Stressing the need to save foreign exchange due to the crisis, Modi called for postponing the purchase of gold and foreign travel for one year.

"We have to save foreign exchange by any means," he said, adding that due to the West Asia conflict, prices of petrol and fertilisers had increased significantly.

"We got into work-from-home, virtual meetings, video conferencing and many other methods during COVID-19. We got habituated to them. The need of the hour is to resume those methods," Modi said. (PTI)

Malaysia searches for 14 missing Indonesians after boat sinks

KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 12: Malaysian authorities searched Tuesday for 14 missing Indonesians after a boat carrying 37 people sank a day earlier.

The maritime office in central Perak state said that 23 people were rescued Monday by a local fishing vessel after the boat capsized off Pangkor island in Perak. The vessel was believed to be carrying undocumented migrants.

Perak maritime chief Capt. Mohamad Shukri Khotob said the fishing vessel called for help after finding the people floating at sea before



A search and rescue operation was activated Monday and would continue until all missing individuals are located, the statement said. Mohamad Shukri said the

victims were believed to have departed from Kisanan, Indonesia, on May 9 and were headed to multiple destinations in Malaysia, including Penang, Selangor, and Kuala Lumpur. A total of 37 people

were believed to be on board, he said.

The 23 survivors were handed to marine authorities for questioning.

Malaysia has long been a destination for Indonesian workers seeking better job opportunities.

Many attempt to enter the country illegally via sea routes, often in overcrowded and unsafe vessels, risking accidents and loss of life. Indonesians make up the large bulk of foreign labour in Malaysia, both legally and undocumented, predominantly in plantations and construction. (AP)