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India, Netherlands elevating ties to strategic partnership: Modi

semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and healthcare sectors.

"We are continuously reducing compliance and increasing the ease of doing business. We have recently carried out next-generation reforms in taxation, labour code, and governance," he told the business leaders.

Modi said manufacturing in India is becoming very cost-effective, and in the services sector, it has become the engine of efficiency and innovation.

"We invite all of you to design and innovate in India. There can be no better time for this than today," Modi said.

"Today's India is a symbol of scale and stability. In terms of scale, we are also the fastest-growing major economy in the world and the world's largest talent pool. Infrastructure, clean energy or connectivity - no one in the world can match India's speed," he said.

"And on the subject of stability, I have completed 12 years of serving as the Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy. In these 12 years, with continuous reforms, we have transformed our economic DNA. Our direction has been clear - to give policy predictability to the private sector and increase opportunities for them," he added.

Modi said his government has opened up every sector for the private sector, be it space, mining or nuclear energy.

The two prime ministers underlined the importance of early implementation of the India-EU-FTA.

LG completes self-enumeration, urges citizens to do their part

trar General and Census Commissioner, India. More than 27,000 field functionaries, including Enumerators and Supervisors, are being deployed across Jammu & Kashmir and their registration and digital integration are being undertaken through the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS). QR-coded appointment letters and identity cards are also being generated through the digital platform.

A comprehensive multi-tier training framework has been put in place for effective capacity building of census functionaries. National trainers have trained master trainers, who subsequently conducted training of field trainers across districts. Training programmes for enumerators and supervisors through trained field trainers are being organised in phased batches with focus on census concepts and definitions, field protocols, use of mobile-based applications, digital data capture systems, household engagement techniques, facilitation of self-enumeration and adherence to data confidentiality provisions.

Special operational planning is also being undertaken for remote, hilly and snow-bound areas of Jammu & Kashmir to ensure timely completion of Census activities under challenging geographical and climatic conditions. Separate operational arrangements, logistics planning and deployment strategies are being put in place for such areas.

A robust multi-layered digital security architecture has been established to safeguard integrity and confidentiality of data at every stage of collection, transmission, storage and processing. Key safeguards include end-to-end encryption, secure digital transmission protocols, protected data storage systems, role-based access controls and certified data centres designated as Critical Information Infrastructure.

Self-Enumeration represents one of the most important and citizen-centric innovations in Census 2027 and is expected to transform public participation in the Census process. Through this facility, households will be able to directly submit their Census information digitally through a secure online portal during the notified period.

Search operation launched

The security apparatus was further strengthened in the border areas of Poonch after this failed infiltration attempt by the PoJK-based terrorists, officials said.

Artillery shell found, destroyed

Later, Army's bomb disposal squad destroyed the shell through a controlled blast as per safety protocols, the officials added.

Saxena approves wage reforms for Ladakh daily wagers

tion for daily wagers, part-time and seasonal/need-based workers, engaged by the UT administration.

Thousands of wage earners, who have been working for as low as Rs 300 to Rs 500 per month for the past several years, will benefit from this move. Many of these workers had been working for more than 10 to 15 years at such low pay.

Saxena ordered payment of wages to these workers as per the Minimum Wages Act of the Government of India.

Under the new wage rationalisation framework, these workers will be categorised into "unskilled" and "skilled" workers. As per the new wage matrix, the skilled workers will be paid wages at the rate of Rs 575 per day, while unskilled workers will be paid at the rate of Rs 450 per day. The revised wages will be determined on a pro-rata basis, depending on their duty hours and the nature of work.

This will result in a manifold increase in the wages of these workers and thus bring a major relief for such wage earners, who have been working as sweepers, gardeners, cleaners, etc., in the Union Territory of Ladakh. These workers include a large number of migrant workers as well as locals, who were forced to work for such abysmally low wages due to the long-prevailing wage anomaly.

The decision follows a number of representations to the LG from daily wagers engaged across different departments of the administration, requesting the implementation of minimum wages for workers. Taking prompt cognisance of the issue, the Lieutenant Governor directed the concerned departments to undertake comprehensive verification of workers engaged after 17 March 2015, and ensure rationalisation of wages in a fair, transparent and uniform manner.

Saxena said different departments in the UT Administration had engaged part-time, seasonal and daily-rated workers over the years at varying remuneration levels, resulting in major disparities in wages.

"UT administration is fully committed to ensuring fair and dignified wages for all workers. Daily wagers, seasonal and part-time workers play a crucial role in strengthening public services and developmental activities across Ladakh, particularly in remote and challenging regions. Every worker deserves fair compensation for their labour and the Administration would do everything required for their welfare in a transparent and accountable manner," he said.

Hw directed departments to verify the engagement details, nature of work, working hours and Aadhaar-linked bank details of all workers and submit verified data, within twenty days. The new wages will be paid to these workers strictly through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), into their bank accounts in a fair and transparent manner.

The administration clarified that the exercise is strictly a wage rationalisation measure and shall not be construed as a commitment to regularise services.

CNG prices hiked by Re 1

am on 17.05.2026 in all geographical areas (GAs) of IGL". "The revision in retail prices of CNG has been effected only to marginally offset the impact of increase in input gas cost along with steep appreciation of USD," it said.

Even after the latest revision, CNG would still offer up to 45 per cent savings towards the running cost when compared to vehicles running on alternate fuel at the current level of prices.

Prez approves increasing SC judge strength from 34 to 38

With the ordinance in place, the total sanctioned judicial strength in the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice of India, would rise from 34 to 38.

The move is seen as a step towards tiding over the continuing crisis of pendency plaguing the court for years now, especially after the pandemic, when the facility of e-filing of cases caught on. The current backlog is over 93000 cases, and threatening to reach six figures even as the court is going into summer recess or 'partial working days' in June.

The government's approval for more judges in the Supreme Court had come after a six-year hiatus. The Parliament had last amended Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 in 2019, raising the sanctioned strength from 31 to 33, that is, excluding the Chief Justice of India.

Presently, there are two judicial vacancies in the top court. These are of the current Chief Justice of India Surya Kant's immediate predecessor, Justice B.R. Gavai, who retired in November 2025, and Justice Rajesh Bindal, who completed office in April 2026.

Three more apex judges are scheduled to retire in 2026. Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Pankaj Mithal would end their tenure in office next month in June, and Justice Sanjay Karol is due to retire in August 2026.

The Framers of the Constitution had originally in Article 124(I) envisaged a Supreme Court consisting of the Chief Justice of India and "not more than seven judges" until the "Parliament by law prescribes a larger number".

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act 1956, as originally enacted, provided for the maximum number of judges (excluding the CJI) to be 10. This number was increased to 13 by the Supreme Court (Number of Judges), Amendment Act, 1960, and to 17 by another amendment to the law.

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1986, augmented the strength of the Supreme Court judges from 17 to 25, excluding the CJI. Subsequently, a fresh amendment in 2009 further augmented the strength of top court judges from 25 to 30. This was followed by the previous amendment in 2019.

Army conducts training capsule for VDGs

grimage, which symbolizes faith, unity and national integration.

The capsule included practical training on firing positions, weapon handling and fire & move drills, enabling participants to effectively respond during contingencies and assist in maintaining vigilance in their respective areas, according to officials.

The initiative reflects the unwavering commitment of Army towards ensuring a safe, peaceful and successful yatra. It also reinforced the strong bond of trust and cooperation between Army and local populace, embodying the spirit of "Awam aur Fauj - Saath Saath".

US offers 'no tangible concessions' to Iran's blueprint to end war

framework also called for lifting all US sanctions and the release of Iranian assets frozen abroad under longstanding US sanctions.

On the pivotal issue of maritime trade checkpoints, reports said the Iranian proposal had emphasised that Tehran would continue to manage the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy conduit which it has largely kept closed since the start of the war. As diplomatic tracks stall, the rhetorical battle has rapidly spilt into the military domain.

On Sunday, Iranian armed forces spokesman Abolfazl Shekarchi warned US President Donald Trump against restarting attacks on Iran.

Issuing a fiery ultimatum via official broadcast channels, the military commander indicated that any renewed Western kinetic action would unleash an unpredictable domestic retaliation.

"The desperate American president should know that if his threats are carried out and Islamic Iran is attacked again, his country's resources and military will be confronted with unprecedented, offensive, surprising and tumultuous scenarios," he said.

At UN, India flags concerns over targeting of vessels in Hormuz

and Israel launching joint attacks on Iran, triggering retaliatory strikes.

Earlier, India had described the attack as "unacceptable".

At least two other Indian-flagged ships have been attacked since the conflict broke out.

Power outages due to reduced water discharge in Chenab: JPDCL

assured consumers that all necessary steps were being taken to procure additional power and mitigate the supply shortfall at the earliest.

"Consumers are urged to use electricity judiciously, particularly during peak hours, in order to minimise grid curtailments and facilitate equitable distribution across the region," it added.

JPDCL said 'it remains committed to restoring normalcy in power supply at the earliest'.

Congress opposes Nicobar project, writes to Def Min

ter of environment, forests and climate change on how these FAQs present a 'completely false picture' on the project's environmental clearances which, in reality, have been given on very dubious grounds," he said.

Referring to tribal rights concerns, Ramesh said he had also written to the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs on May 13, alleging that the project clearance process "flagrantly violate, in letter and spirit, the individual and collective rights given to tribal communities by Parliament."

He said, "Let me straightaway say that there can be no two opinions on the need to strengthen our nation's defences. There can also be no two opinions on the need to project India's strategic capabilities in a credible manner."

However, he suggested that India could strengthen its military presence in the region through existing facilities and infrastructure expansion projects that would cause comparatively less environmental damage.

Ramesh pointed out that INS Baaz in Campbell Bay, commissioned in 2012, had plans pending for nearly five years to extend its runway and build a naval jetty. He argued these proposals would have "far less adverse environmental impacts".

He also referred to existing assets under the Andaman and Nicobar Command, including INS Kardip, INS Kohassa, INS Utkrosh, INS Jarawa and the Car Nicobar Air Force Station, saying they could be expanded with significantly lower ecological costs.

Questioning the strategic justification of the larger project, Ramesh said, "Third, the transshipment port and the township that are an essential part of the Great Nicobar Island Project do not enhance our country's military capability in any way. Yet, now that suddenly has emerged as a major justification for them."

"Finally, I wish to reiterate that the Great Nicobar Island Project in its present shape and form is a recipe for ecological disaster," he added.

Jairam urged Singh to "seriously consider the above alternatives" which, he said, had also been proposed by distinguished naval officers in their writings.

China blocks Taiwan from WHA despite US, EU backing

and argued that Washington was contributing disproportionately to the agency's funding.

The European Union also expressed support for Taiwan's participation in the WHA.

A spokesperson for the European External Action Service (EEAS) said that Taiwan should be allowed to participate in international mechanisms whenever organisational rules permit it.

The statement came after Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun announced that Beijing had re-

fused to approve Taiwan's participation in this year's assembly under its "one China" principle.

Responding to Beijing's stance, the EEAS clarified that China's interpretation of the "one China" principle lacks international consensus and is not formally adopted by the EU.

The bloc reaffirmed that, while it recognises the People's Republic of China as China's legal government, it continues to maintain close, cooperative ties with Taiwan across multiple sectors.

Salaries of 4 ACDs withheld

REGA revealed "extremely poor & negligible achievement" in generating person-days against the approved labour budget targets in certain districts.

The order stated that despite repeated directions and monitoring by the department for timely execution of works, demand registration and enhancement of employment generation under MGNREGA, some districts failed to show satisfactory progress, indicating a lack of effective supervision, monitoring and field-level implementation.

As per the order, the officials whose salaries were withheld included Muzaffar Ahmad Sheikh of Shopian, Abdul Rashid Ganaie of Kupwara, Manoj Kumar of Kishtwar and Rafiq Ahmad of Samba.

The government said the salaries of the concerned officers would remain withheld with immediate effect till further orders and subject to improvement in performance under the scheme.

The secretary said the department was committed towards ensuring effective implementation of MGNREGA and accountability at every level.

"MGNREGA is a flagship rural livelihood programme aimed at providing guaranteed wage employment to rural households. Any laxity in implementation, delay in execution of works or failure to achieve approved labour budget targets defeats the objective of the scheme and directly impacts the rural communities," he said.

He said district and field-level officers have been repeatedly directed to improve the planning, execution and monitoring of works to ensure timely employment generation.

"We expect all implementing agencies and officers to work with seriousness and dedication. Strict action will be taken wherever negligence or poor performance is found. The focus of the department remains on strengthening the rural livelihoods and ensuring that benefits of the scheme reach deserving people on time," he added.

The order further directed all the District Programme Coordinators, who are Deputy Commissioners, to closely monitor the implementation of MGNREGA and furnish fortnightly progress reports to the Administrative Department. It warned that any non-compliance would invite disciplinary proceedings under the relevant provisions of the J&K Civil Services Rules and other applicable laws.

Kavinder highlights role of civil society in nation-building

healthcare, environmental protection, water conservation, women empowerment, disaster relief and social development as truly inspirational.

Invoking Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047', he underlined the critical role of social organisations and voluntary institutions in achieving this national goal.

"Organisations like Rotary serve as a strong bridge between society and administration," he said, adding that meaningful and widespread change becomes possible only when government and society work together in tandem.

Flagging pressing social challenges confronting the country, including drug abuse, environmental imbalance, mental stress, inadequate health awareness and growing social disconnect among youth, he stressed that government efforts alone were insufficient to address these issues and that active societal participation was equally essential.

"Leadership means not just personal success but responsibility towards society," he said and called upon youth to channelise their energy, talent and capacity for innovation in the service of nation-building.

Citing blood donation camps, health check-up drives, cleanliness campaigns, educational support, plantation drives and disaster relief work being carried out by Rotary Clubs as outstanding examples of positive social transformation, Gupta said that true leadership lies in striving to ensure that help reaches the last person in society.

He made a fervent appeal to citizens to consciously adopt fuel-saving practices in their daily lives and urged people to use public transport wherever possible, avoid unnecessary use of private vehicles, switch off engines at traffic signals and embrace car-pooling as a habit.

"Saving fuel is not merely an economic necessity but a national duty and a direct contribution to reducing the country's import burden and carbon footprint," he said.

He called upon Rotary Clubs across the region to actively spread awareness about fuel conservation as part of their community service initiatives, adding that small individual actions, when multiplied across millions of households, can bring about a transformative impact on the nation's energy security.

"When the PM calls upon the nation, it is the responsibility of every citizen to respond with action," he said, underlining that collective effort and civic consciousness were the hallmarks of a truly developed and responsible society. H3 congratulated Rotary Club Jammu Tawi and Rotary District for organising the seminar and extended his best wishes to all participants for a bright future and continued social service.

Sudan Biradari Committee held

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, MAY 17

Today, a significant meeting of the Sudan Biradari (community) was held in Jandial, during which a new committee was constituted following the resignation of the former President, Shri Madan Lal Sharma. This meeting was conducted with the counsel and consent of the "Wazir" (Custodian) of the Baba Sato Sidh Ji Shrine and all senior members of the Sudan Biradari Committee.

The following appointments were made for the new committee:

- **President:** Shri Nand Lal Sudan - Resident of Village Jandial Thathi
- **Treasurer:** Shri Subhash Sharma - Resident of Village Jandial Thathi
- **Executive Members:**
 1. Rakesh Kumar - Resident of Tibbu Talab
 2. Shiv Kumar - Resident of Kalyanpur



3. Ajay Kumar - Resident of Panjor
4. Hem Raj - Resident of Panjor
5. Mela Ram - Resident of Jandial Thathi
6. Rohit Sharma - Resident of Jandial
7. Jai Pal - Resident of

- Trilokpur
 8. Dwarka Nath - Resident of Jandial Thathi
 9. Khem Raj - Resident of Jandial Thathi
 10. Kamal Das - Resident of Jandial Thathi
- All members of the Sudan Biradari expressed their

heartfelt gratitude to the former President, Shri Madan Lal Sharma, for his services and contributions, and extended their best wishes to the newly formed committee for the welfare, unity, and progress of the community.

DC Pulwama completes self-enumeration on spot; Urges active public participation

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, MAY 17

District Administration Pulwama today formally kickstarted the Self-Enumeration (SE) phase of Census 2027 during a mega launch event organised at the Administrative Complex, DC Office Pulwama.

The event marked the commencement of the Self-Enumeration process in the district, aimed at encouraging citizens to voluntarily participate in the Census exercise through the digital platform. The SE portal will remain open for 15 days (upto 31st May) prior to the start of House to House Houselisting Operations (HLO) by the Enumerator.

Deputy Commissioner Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom, who is also the Principal Census Officer of the district, led the programme by completing his self-enumeration on the spot

and urged people to actively participate in the national exercise for ensuring accurate and comprehensive data collection.

The event was attended by Member of Legislative Assembly, Tral, Rafiq Ahmad Naik; former District Development Council Chairperson, Syed Abdul Bari Andrabi; former DDC members, representatives of various political parties, social activists and the general public. Besides, Additional Deputy Commissioners of Pulwama and Tral, Chief Planning Officer Pulwama, General Manager DIC Pulwama, District Census Coordinator; Charge Officers, officers from the administration, Supervisors, enumerators and officials from various departments were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC said that Census is an important national exercise which forms the

bedrock for policy formulation, welfare initiatives, resource allocation and developmental planning. "As the Self-Enumeration exercise starts today, I urge all citizens to participate in the process enthusiastically and ensure that accurate information is furnished," he added.

Dr. Qayoom further said that Census 2027 will broadly be conducted in three phases including Self-Enumeration, House Listing and Housing Census (HLO) and Population Enumeration. He said that the self-enumeration phase, which commences prior to the house listing phase, enables citizens to independently furnish their details in a secure and convenient manner.

He further stressed upon Charge Officers and field functionaries to create mass awareness regarding the initiative so that maximum public participation is ensured.