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## India, Italy script new chapter with 'special strategic partnership'

dence," he said. The Prime Minister announced plans for setting up an India-Italy Innovation Centre and said both countries would work together in shipping, logistics and the blue economy.

Highlighting complementary economic strengths, Modi said Italy was globally known for "design and precision", while India had emerged as a "powerhouse of scale, talent and affordable innovation".

"Therefore, we will move forward on the principle of 'Design and Develop in India and Italy and Deliver for the World'," he said.

The Prime Minister also thanked Italy for its cooperation on the proposed India-European Union Free Trade Agreement and noted that more than 800 Italian companies were contributing to India's growth story.

Modi added that there was rising interest in Italy towards Indian yoga, Ayurveda and cuisine, underlining growing people-to-people connect between the two nations.

At the end of the talks, Modi invited Meloni to visit India. Modi, who landed in Rome on Tuesday night on the final leg of his five-nation tour, was accorded a ceremonial military honour when he arrived for talks with Meloni.

Ahead of bilateral talks, he called on Italian President Sergio Mattarella and discussed different aspects relating to India-Italy friendship, including trade, investment and cultural linkages. They also discussed collaboration in areas such as AI, critical minerals, space and nuclear energy.

Earlier, Modi said that his visit would focus on ways to strengthen cooperation between India and Italy, with particular attention to the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).

In a social media post, he also said that the two sides will review the Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029, a comprehensive road map for cooperation in various sectors.

Soon after PM Modi's arrival on Tuesday night, Meloni hosted him for dinner and accompanied him on a visit to the iconic Colosseum ahead of their formal talks aimed at further boosting India-Italy ties.

The two leaders have maintained close engagement in recent years, with Meloni also visiting India for the G20 Summit in 2023.

India and Italy have witnessed growing economic engagement in recent years, with bilateral trade reaching Euro 14.25 billion in 2025.

India's exports stood at Euro 8.55 billion, while Italian exports to India were recorded at Euro 5.70 billion in 2025, marking an increase of 9.42 per cent over 2024.

The two countries have set a target of annual bilateral trade of Euro 20 billion by 2029.

Italy is India's fourth-largest trading partner in the European Union and has identified India as one of the priority countries under its global trade strategy.

The Indian community in Italy, estimated at 1,86,833 as of January 2025, is the largest Indian diaspora group in the European Union. Over 5,100 Indian students are currently studying in Italian universities.

## Terrorism can't sustain itself; it needs support system to survive: LG

order, beat policing proves highly effective. When a beat constable resolves that no crime will occur within their jurisdiction and that public land will not be occupied illegally, such unwavering commitment inevitably delivers results," he said.

"All new recruits are heirs to this noble legacy and they will enrich it further," he said and added, "Every uniform of the Jammu & Kashmir police tells a story of courage, commitment, and purpose woven into the fabric of the nation's history."

"Each time you put on the uniform, remember that you are adding a proud chapter to its legacy. Take pride in the ideals of defence and service that the Jammu & Kashmir police embody, for they define both your duty and your honour," the LG said.

He also commended the Jammu & Kashmir police for their swift and effective action against drug smugglers and drug peddlers during the ongoing Nasha Mukh Jammu & Kashmir Campaign.

"J&K police have laid out a comprehensive plan to completely choke drug entry routes. I am confident that the actions in the coming days will be stringent, and will yield major successes," he said.

Over 3,200 newly recruited constables were inducted into the Jammu & Kashmir police.

Chief secretary Atal Dulloo, DGP Nalin Prabhakar, principal secretary (home) Chandraker Bharti, special DG (coordination, PHQ) S J M. Gillani, commandant general (home guards) Abdul Ghani Mir, LG's principal secretary Mandeep K Bhandari, senior officials of police and civil administration, and family members of the new recruits were among those who were present on the occasion.

## HC announces virtual hearings

"economic self-defence" amid concerns arising from rising crude oil prices and energy security.

The measures would remain in force until further orders, it said.

"With effect from May 21, 2026, the high court shall encourage virtual hearings and virtual appearance by learned counsel, subject to observance of the decorum and protocol prescribed for virtual proceedings," the circular said.

It said that during the vacation period commencing on June 8, the nominated vacation benches shall deal with the matters coming before them through virtual mode.

The court said the Judicial Academy shall not conduct any physical training programme, and all training programmes, workshops, orientations, and related academic activities shall be conducted only through virtual mode.

"The officers of the registry shall, wherever feasible, pool the transport facilities allotted to them to minimise fuel consumption and ensure optimal utilisation of official resources," the circular said.

## Council of Ministers to meet, discuss key issues

ing of the council of ministers this year, amidst speculation of a cabinet reshuffle.

At the meeting, the functioning of various ministries and departments, key decisions taken in the recent past and their outcomes and future plans will be discussed, sources said.

Different aspects of various government schemes and programmes, how to implement those for maximum success and other subjects are also expected to be reviewed.

The prime minister is likely to refer to the ongoing West Asia crisis and its economic effects, and may give directions to the ministries and departments on how to navigate for the minimum inconvenience of the citizens.

Sectors like energy, agriculture, fertilisers, aviation, shipping and logistics may get focussed attention at the meeting, the sources said.

Soon after the West Asia conflict started, Modi had directed all concerned to take every possible step to ameliorate the problems of citizens and the sectors affected by it.

The meeting is also likely to discuss the government's priority on bringing reforms in all sectors for the benefit of the common people.

The prime minister had earlier outlined the reform priorities for the next 10 years, asserting that his government's

"Reform Express" has delivered systemic transformation and benefitted common citizens in a significant way.

The meeting of the council of ministers comes after the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) massive success in the recently-held Assembly polls in West Bengal and Assam, besides the formation of an NDA government in Puducherry again.

Modi has been holding meetings of the entire council of ministers from time to time to discuss key policy and governance issues, but this meeting assumes political significance as it will be held after the recent round of Assembly polls.

## 4 DIGs placed as in-charge IGPs

Telecom, J&K, were also placed as in-charge IGPs.

The order stated that posting orders of the officers would be issued separately.

## Saxena accords industry status to hotels in Ladakh

centives, concessions and infrastructure support at par with other industries in the UT of Ladakh.

The industry status for hotels and guest houses would make them eligible for electricity & water tariffs at industrial rates, which are cheaper than the commercial rates currently applicable to these units. This would also make them eligible to avail concessional bank loans, under the state/central government industrial policies. These hotels and guest houses would be exempted from property tax and would also be able to access capital incentives, subsidies and support schemes, as applicable to other eligible units, under any Government of India incentive schemes.

At present, hotels, guest houses, resorts and homestays in Ladakh are charged commercial electricity tariffs, ie at the rate of Rs 5.49 per unit. But with the "industry status", these will now be entitled to industrial electricity tariff, of Rs 4.10 per unit. Similarly, commercial water tariffs, currently applicable to tourism establishments, range between Rs 28 to Rs 46 per kilolitre, depending upon the consumption slabs, whereas industrial water tariffs range from Rs 26 to Rs 29 per kilolitre, offering substantial relief to tourism units. Significant reductions will also apply to flat-rate water connections.

These incentives and concessions would reduce the operational cost of these lodging/boarding establishments, enhance investor confidence, improve project viability, facilitate access to institutional finance and enable tourism enterprises to avail benefits under the industrial policies and infrastructure support mechanism.

"Granting industry status to hotels & guest houses will significantly strengthen the hospitality sector in Ladakh. Apart from reducing operational costs and improving investment potential, this historic reform will play a vital role in local employment and livelihood creation and regional development. The hospitality and tourism sector has significant potential to catalyse sustainable economic development and tourism promotion in Ladakh," Saxena said.

This reform will also enhance visitor experience and further establish Ladakh as a world-class tourism destination rooted in sustainability, culture and hospitality, he added.

The decision comes following several representations from tourism stakeholders, particularly the All Ladakh Hotel and Guest House Association, seeking extension of industrial electricity and water tariffs to hotels and guest houses operating in Ladakh. Stakeholders had highlighted the increasing operational burden on tourism establishments due to high commercial utility tariffs, especially during the harsh winter months, when heating and water requirements substantially increase.

The Department of Tourism & Culture, UT Ladakh, shall function as the nodal department for certifying eligible units and the implementation of the notification.

## India, South Korea ink defence MoUs; boost industry ties

East Policy and Republic of Korea (RoK)'s regional strategic vision, reiterating their commitment to strengthening defence ties in line with the shared objectives of maintaining a free, open, inclusive and rule-based Indo-Pacific.

During his visit to South Korea, Singh also met Minister Defense Acquisition Program Administration, Lee Yongchul, where both leaders agreed to harness the efforts to create avenues for joint development, joint production and joint exports.

India and South Korea are also in discussions for a roadmap to unlock the potential of a Defence Innovation Accelerator Ecosystem (KIND-X) to synergise the innovation ecosystems of the two countries.

Singh chaired the India-RoK Defence Industry Business RoundTable, which brought together senior government officials and leading defence industry representatives from both countries. The participants explored new opportunities in defence manufacturing, co-development, co-production and supply chain partnerships.

Addressing the business leaders, the defence minister highlighted India's growing defence industrial ecosystem and the opportunities available under the government's initiatives aimed at promoting indigenous defence manufacturing and global partnerships.

He invited Korean defence companies to strengthen engagement with Indian industry and contribute towards long-term mutually beneficial collaboration.

"The success of India-Korea industrial cooperation in the commercial sector demonstrates the enormous potential of long-term trusted partnerships between the two countries. The time has now come to extend this successful model into the defence sector, where technology, innovation, manufacturing capability, and strategic trust are becoming increasingly interconnected," Singh said.

He noted that Korea's technological excellence, combined with India's scale, talent, manufacturing ecosystem, and innovation capabilities, creates a powerful foundation for cooperation.

Two agreements were signed between L&T, India and Hanwa Co Ltd. the government said in a release.

The pacts are expected to facilitate enhanced collaboration between the defence industries of both countries and promote technology cooperation and capacity building.

The defence minister reiterated India's commitment to achieve self-reliance in defence manufacturing, stating the all-time high figures of approximately Rs 1.54 lakh crore worth of defence production and nearly Rs 40,000 crore worth of defence exports in FY2025-26.

He added that defence exports are poised to reach Rs 50,000 crore within the next 1-2 years, while defence production is projected to rise to Rs 1.75 lakh crore in the next couple of months.

Singh described Operation Sindoor as a testament to India's transformation into a strong, confident & capable nation.

"The operation was proof that India will not tolerate terrorism in any form. As a responsible nuclear power, we firmly adhere to a policy of No First Use. However, there are times when people mistake our restraint and commitment to peace for weakness. While India remains committed to its No First Use policy, it will not tolerate any form of nuclear blackmail. This is New India," he said.

## Cong slams govt over China ties

termed the government's stance "the height of hypocrisy", claiming it came from an administration that practices "Continuing, Calibrated Capitulation to China".

The Congress leader said it was the prime minister who gave an "inexplicable clean chit" to China on June 19, 2020, in a "brazen insult" to the 20 jawans martyred earlier in

Ladakh.

"It is the Modi government that has, in negotiations with China, given up traditional patrolling and herding rights in very many locations in Ladakh. It is under the PM's close watch that India had a record trade deficit with China of about USD 115 billion in 2025-26, much to the disadvantage of Indian industry (specially MSMEs)," he claimed.

Ramesh alleged that the prime minister has done nothing on the revelations of senior army officers on the absolutely pivotal role of China in planning, monitoring, and executing Pakistan's response to Operation Sindoor in May 2025.

"The incontrovertible fact is that India has to deal with the economic and strategic challenge from China on an ongoing basis across many fronts. But the Great Nicobar Island Project is overwhelmingly a commercial enterprise and the transshipment port that is part of it has no component of military infrastructure," he claimed.

Ramesh said ways to expand that infrastructure at INS Baaz and other locations of the Andaman and Nicobar Command have been suggested but are being ignored for long because the Great Nicobar Island Project that the PM is "bulldozing through" is, in all likelihood, going to be part of the sprawling "Modani" business empire.

"Sadly, that will have disastrous ecological and humanitarian impacts," the former environment minister said.

The Congress has been claiming the Great Nicobar infrastructure project will have disastrous implications for the ecology of the area, while the government claims the project is necessary for India's strategic capabilities.

## Voter count crosses 72.24 lakh after 3.39 lakh new enrolments

includes 36,62,502 male, 35,61,488 female, and 141 Third gender voters. This marks a net increase of 2,26,040 voters compared to the previous revision concluded in January 2025, when the rolls listed 69,98,091 voters with January 1, 2025 as the qualifying date.

The Commission said the exercise witnessed substantial participation from the eligible citizens, with 5,10,285 forms received during the revision period. These forms were processed by Panchayat Election Booth Officials, Assistant Electoral Registration Officers, and Electoral Registration Officers in accordance with the procedure and timelines prescribed by the Commission.

To maximize outreach, the SEC undertook extensive SVEEP campaigns through print and electronic media, including radio jingles, voter appeals by the State Election Commissioner and regular newspaper advertisements. The district authorities further strengthened the awareness using hoardings, mobile awareness vans, and other SVEEP modes to ensure no eligible voter was left out.

State Election Commissioner Shantmanu commended the coordinated efforts of District Panchayat Election Officers, EROs, AEROs, PEBOs, the staff of the State Election Commission and the Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Department, as well as representatives of political parties.

He also thanked the public for their active participation and cooperation in the successful completion of the revision exercise.

The SEC particularly lauded the enthusiastic response from youth, who turned out in large numbers to enroll in the Panchayat Electoral Roll 2026 and contributed significantly to the 3.39 lakh new additions.

## 5 accused sent to judicial custody

tra.

Judge Gupta also allowed five more days of custodial interrogation of another accused, Shubham Khairnar.

In its remand paper, the agency said Khairnar needed to be further examined to identify and apprehend other co-accused persons to whom he had sold the NEET-UG 2026 papers, besides recovering and analysing digital devices and evidence, including communication records and financial trail connected to the "paper leak network".

It said that the larger conspiracy and source of the leaked question paper had to be unearthed, and the accused had to be taken to various parts of the country, including Nasik in Maharashtra.

According to the paper, Khairnar also had to be interrogated to identify locations where questions were revealed to certain candidates

Earlier, on May 14, the court sent Mangilal Khatik, Vikas Biwal, Dinesh Biwal, Yash Yadav and Shubham Khairnar to seven days' CBI custody, saying the allegations revealed the role of an "organised gang" involved in leaking and circulating confidential examination papers for monetary gain. The same day, the CBI arrested biology lecturer Manisha Mandhare, who was part of the National Testing Agency's (NTA) paper-setting committee. She was sent to 14 days' CBI custody on May 17.

According to the agency, Waghmare conspired with a public servant associated with the NTA and others to receive the question paper and answers of the NEET exam, after which she provided them to several people, including some of the accused such as Lokhande for monetary benefit. It alleged that Kulkarni, along with Waghmare and several others, provided the "confidential exam-related material" to "selected students", for which the kingpin, who was a "subject expert", received a "substantial amount of money".

The NEET (UG) 2026 exam for admission to undergraduate courses in medical colleges, held on May 3, was cancelled two days later amid allegations of paper leak.

The government has asked the CBI to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the "irregularities".

## War will spread beyond Middle East if Iran faces new action: IRGC

through direct action rather than rhetoric. "We are men of war, and you will see our power on the battlefield, not in empty statements on social media," its official statement said.

Earlier on Tuesday, US President Donald Trump said that Iran wanted to make a deal "so badly" and asserted that the ongoing conflict would end "very quickly."

Speaking at a press conference, President Trump also said oil prices would decline sharply in the coming period. The US President further stated that global oil prices were expected to fall due to abundant supply.

"There's so much oil out there, they're going to come plummeting down. We're going to end that war very quickly. They want to make a deal so badly... You are going to see oil prices plummet. They're going to come down. There's so much oil out there, they're going to come plummeting down," he said.

The development comes amidst the US Senate earlier in the day passing a resolution seeking to limit President Donald Trump's war powers in Iran.

Senators approved a motion to discharge the resolution from committee in a 50-47 vote, with four Republican lawmakers joining most Democrats in support of the measure, CBS News reported. This was the eighth such attempt by Senate democrats to pass such a resolution.

The resolution, introduced by Democratic Senator Tim Kaine, would direct the President to "remove the United States Armed Forces from hostilities within or against Iran, unless explicitly authorised by a declaration of war or a specific authorisation for use of military force."

The development follows the ongoing negotiations related to the peace deal between the US and Iran, followed by

US President Donald Trump's earlier announcement to put a "planned attack" on Tehran on hold after appeals from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The US President further mentioned that they are "prepared to go forward with a full, large-scale assault" on Iran.

## Putin, Xi unite in criticism of US on nuclear, security issues

have been discussing for years.

Moscow had signalled ahead of the visit that it was seeking further energy agreements with China, the largest buyer of Russian oil, including pipeline supplies and sea-borne shipments.

During Putin's last visit in September 2025, Russian gas giant Gazprom said both sides had agreed to move forward with Power of Siberia 2, a 2,600-km (1,616-mile) pipeline to carry 50 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas per year from Russia to China via Mongolia.

China has said very little publicly about the project. While Xi said on Wednesday that cooperation in energy and resource connectivity should be the "ballast stone" in China-Russia relations, he did not mention the pipeline.

Key issues such as gas pricing remain unresolved, and analysts expect negotiations could take years.

The Kremlin said both sides reached a "general understanding on the parameters" of the project, although no details or clear timeline were agreed.

Xi welcomed Putin with an honour guard and a gun salute at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, as children waved Chinese and Russian flags.

"The global agenda of peace and development is facing new risks and challenges, with the danger of fragmentation of the international community and a drift back toward the 'law of the jungle'," their joint declaration said.

## PoJK erupts in protest as activists accuse police of abuse cover-up

marriage proposal involving her 19-year-old daughter. Speakers claimed that a theft case was later filed against the family in retaliation.

Demonstrators said that despite six months having passed since the registration of the case, no proper complaint proceedings had moved forward in court.

Protest leaders accused police officers of abusing their authority, including allegedly taking one of the girls to a river at night and subjecting the family to harassment.

They called on the Inspector General of Police and judicial authorities to launch a transparent inquiry into the incident.

## Lt Gen Pratik reviews LoC security situation

Jammu's Rajouri district.

"Gen Pratik Sharma reviewed the prevailing security situation and operational preparedness of the forward areas of Sunderbani sector along the LoC," the northern command said in a post on X.

"He interacted with the troops, including BSF personnel, commending them for their battle-hardened resilience, indomitable courage and unwavering commitment to duty. He encouraged all for rapid absorption of emerging technologies with an aim to upskill and always remain combat ready," it added.

Jammu and Kashmir has a 740-km-long LoC located in Rajouri, Poonch and parts of Jammu district in Jammu division, and in Baramulla, Bandipora and Kupwara districts of the valley.

The Army is deployed along the LoC, while the 240-km-long International Border is located in Samba, Kathua and Jammu districts.

## Kavinder calls upon youth to be architects of progressive India

Puducherry, who travelled to the Himalayan state as part of the cross-cultural immersion initiative aimed at deepening bonds between India's diverse regions.

"When a young person from southern India comes to Himachal and a young Himachali understands the south, it is not merely geographical distance that shrinks - it is the emotional distance between hearts that dissolves," he said.

He asked the visiting students to look beyond Himachal Pradesh as a tourist destination and instead engage deeply with its people, folk traditions, living culture and spiritual heritage, noting that the rivers of Himachal do not merely carry water but the philosophy and message of an ancient civilisation.

He also outlined what he described as the 'Five P' framework - five interconnected pillars that define the cultural, social and developmental trajectory of the nation.

He said Parampara, or Tradition, forms the very soul of a society, encompassing folk culture, languages, art, spirituality and the timeless values that anchor India's civilisational identity.

Paryatan, or Tourism, he emphasised, is not mere travel but a transformative experience of cultural exchange that deepens national integration and emotional belonging.

Paraspar Samvad, meaning Dialogue, he described as the very foundation of mutual understanding through which trust, harmony and national cohesion are built among India's diverse communities.

Praudhyogiki, or Technology, he acknowledged as a powerful enabler of progress - but only when harnessed in the service of society, education, environment and human welfare.

And the fifth pillar, Progress, he defined as holistic advancement that preserves cultural sensitivity, ecological balance and social equity alongside economic growth. "The realisation of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat lies in the harmonious convergence of these five pillars," he said.

Acknowledging India's rapid emergence as a global technology powerhouse - underscored by national initiatives such as Digital India, Startup India and Skill India - Gupta sounded a measured note of caution, stressing that technology must never be allowed to become an instrument of isolation or mere consumption.

He emphasised that technology is meaningful only when it is rooted in humanity and that if it is severed from sensitivity, it can leave a person profoundly alone from within. He called upon young minds to champion the guiding principle of 'Technology with Humanity' as they step into an increasingly digital world.

Reminding the gathering that India today is home to the world's largest youth population, the Governor asked students not to limit their ambitions to academic degrees alone. He exhorted them to become empowered citizens who give direction to society and to the nation, emphasising that while success matters, what matters even more is sensitivity, integrity and a profound sense of responsibility towards the nation.

Invoking the timeless verse - "Desh hume deta hai sab kuch, hum bhi toh kuch dena seekhein" - he called for a renewed pledge of service and nation-building among India's youth.

He warmly congratulated the Central University of Himachal Pradesh for its role as the nodal institution, describing the responsibility not as a mere administrative mandate but as a proud national duty to strengthen unity, cultural integration and the consciousness of youth.

On the occasion, the governor also felicitated the delegation from NIT Puducherry. Students from Central University Dharamshala and NIT Puducherry also presented colourful cultural performances showcasing the rich cultural diversity of the country.

Prof Harmohinder Singh Bedi, Chancellor, Central University, Dharamshala, Prof. Sat Prakash Bansal, Vice Chancellor, CU Dharamshala, Dr. Gaurishankar from NIT Puducherry, faculty members, students and other distinguished guests were also present on the occasion.