



Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala (R), and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrive for a meeting in Prague



Veteran Frances Grant attends a military procession celebrating Victory in Europe Day, marking the end of the Second World War in Europe



France's Prez Emmanuel Macron waits for the arrival of EU Prez at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris



Netherlands' PM Dick Schoof lays a wreath during a solemn annual national service to commemorate the war dead in Amsterdam

allovertheworld



Britain's King Charles III waves before the military procession marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day, in London

German coalition deal signed on eve of Merz govt launch

BERLIN: The conservatives of Germany's designated chancellor Friedrich Merz and the centre-left Social Democrats formally signed their coalition contract on Monday, on the eve of launching their new government. Merz, 69, is on Tuesday set to be sworn in as the new leader of Europe's biggest economy, ending half a year of political paralysis in Berlin. The CDU/CSU alliance of Merz and their future junior partners the Social Democrats (SPD) have vowed to revive the ailing economy and rebuild the military at a time when US President Donald Trump has cast doubt on the future of transatlantic security and trade ties.

Traditional culture, fancy dress meet at Hong Kong's raucous bun festival

HONG KONG: Kids dressed as real and fantasy heroes, drummers pounding a beat and sweet treats offered to powerful gods - thousands of visitors poured onto a small island in Hong Kong for its annual Bun Festival on Monday. Held on the Chinese city's outlying Cheung Chau, the raucous five-day festival transforms the usually quiet fishing community into an explosion of colour and noise that blends Cantonese traditions with modern culture and draws locals and tourists alike.

Spain foreign tourist numbers break record in early 2025

MADRID: Spain welcomed a record 17 million foreign tourists in the first three months of 2025 as the buoyant sector drives an economy outstripping European peers, official data showed on Monday. The 17.1 million foreign tourists arriving in Spain from January to March was a 5.7-percent increase on the same period in 2024, the National Statistics Institute said. Britain, France and Germany supplied the most holidaymakers to the world's second most-visited country, which last year hosted a record 94 million foreign tourists seeking its sun, beaches and culture.

Lithuania to spend \$1.2 bn to fortify Russia, Belarus border

VILNIUS: Lithuania will spend 1.1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) to fortify its border with Russia and Belarus, including to purchase anti-tank mines, the NATO member on the alliance's eastern flank said on Monday. Lithuania and its fellow Baltic states Latvia and Estonia - all bordering Russia - fear they could be next in Moscow's crosshairs were it to win its war against Ukraine. All three countries have been ramping up their defences since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and boosting their border security measures over what they allege was a Russia-inspired influx of migrants at the border.

EU chief announces 500-mn-euro plan to attract global researchers

PARIS: The European Union will launch a new incentives package worth 500 million euros to make the bloc "a magnet for researchers" from elsewhere, Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said Monday. Speaking at a Paris conference on ways to lure foreign researchers, especially from the United States under Donald Trump, she said of the \$567-million initiative that "we have to offer the right incentives".

US mountain climber dies in Nepal

KATHMANDU: A US climber died attempting to scale the world's fifth-highest mountain, Makalu, his expedition organiser said Monday, the second death of this climbing season. Alexander Pancoe, 39, died at Camp 2 of the 8,485-metre (27,838-foot) Makalu on Sunday evening. An accomplished climber, Pancoe had survived a brain tumour when he was younger. He had completed the Explorer's Grand Slam, a challenge that involves climbing the highest peak on each of the seven continents and then skiing to both the North and South Pole.

UAE schools to teach AI from kindergarten up

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates will introduce artificial intelligence lessons for schoolchildren of all ages, officials said, in its latest initiative to stay at the technology's forefront. AI instruction in government schools, including at kindergarten level, would start from the next academic year, Dubai ruler and UAE Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum said.

# 'Step back from the brink' UN chief urges India, Pakistan

PTI, UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antnio Guterres Monday voiced concern over tensions between India and Pakistan being at "their highest in years" and called for "maximum restraint and stepping back from the brink".

"Make no mistake: A military solution is no solution," Guterres said in a brief statement.

Guterres offered his "good offices" to both governments in the service of peace. "The United Nations stands ready to support any initiative that promotes de-escalation, diplomacy, and a renewed commitment to peace," he said.

His remarks came hours before closed consultations of the UN Security Council on India-Pakistan tensions after Islamabad sought an emergency meeting.

"Tensions between India and Pakistan are at their highest in years. I deeply respect and am profoundly grateful to the Government and people of both countries - and their significant contributions to the work of the United Nations, not least UN peacekeeping, Guterres said.

"And so it pains me to see relations reaching a boiling

## PAKISTAN THREATENS NUCLEAR RESPONSE IF INDIA ATTACKS OR DISRUPTS WATER FLOW

PTI, MOSCOW: Pakistan will respond with "full spectrum of force", including nuclear, if it is attacked or its vital water flow disrupted, Pakistan's ambassador here has warned amid tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad after the Pahalgam terror attack. Muhammad Khalid Jamali made the comments during an interview with Russia's state-run TASS news agency on Sunday. Warning that Pakistan was prepared to respond to any aggression, the ambassador said, We in Pakistan will use the full spectrum of force, both conventional and nuclear. Ties between India and Pakistan plummeted following the April 22 Pahalgam

terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir that killed 26 people, mostly tourists. Jajamali reiterated Islamabad's position regarding the Indus Water Treaty, a key agreement between India and Pakistan, which New Delhi suspended last week as a part of its diplomatic response to the terror attack. Any attempt to usurp the water of the lower riparian, or to stop it, or to divert it would be an act of war against Pakistan and would be responded to with full force, including nuclear, he said. The envoy, however, urged de-escalation, noting the potential danger given that both countries possess nuclear weapons.

point," he said.

Guterres said that he understands the raw feelings following the awful terror attack" in Pahalgam on April 22 and again strongly condemned that attack, extending his condolences to the families of the "Targeting civilians is unacceptable and those responsible must be brought to justice through credible and lawful means," he said.

"It is also essential especially at this critical hour -- to avoid a military confrontation that could easily

spin out of control," Guterres added. "Now is the time for maximum restraint and stepping back from the brink," he said.

Ties between India and Pakistan plummeted following the Pahalgam attack that killed 26 people, mostly tourists.

India announced a raft of punitive measures against Pakistan including suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, shutting down of the only operation land border crossing at Attari and downgrading of diplo-

matic ties following the terror attack.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India is committed to taking "firm and decisive" action against terrorists and their backers.

Modi also told the top defence brass that the armed forces have "complete operational freedom" to decide on the mode, targets and timing of India's response to the attack.

Amid raging tensions, Pakistan requested closed consultations on the situation and the Greek Pres-

idency has scheduled the meeting for May 5 in the afternoon.

Pakistan currently sits as a non-permanent member of the powerful 15-nation Security Council, which is being presided over by Greece for the month of May.

Apart from the five veto-wielding permanent members -- China, France, Russia, the UK and the US -- the 10 non-permanent members in the Council are Algeria, Denmark, Greece, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, South Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Somalia.

In the weeks following the Pahalgam attack, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke with all Council members, except China and Pakistan. He also spoke with Guterres. In his calls, Jaishankar underlined that its perpetrators, backers and planners must be brought to justice.

Last Friday, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said at a press conference at the UN that his country has the right to convene a meeting when "we feel appropriate".

## Trump threatens 100% tariff on foreign-made films

AP, NEW YORK: President Donald Trump is opening a new salvo in his tariff war, targeting films made outside the US

In a post Sunday night on his Truth Social platform, Trump said he has authorized the Department of Commerce and the Office of the US Trade Representative to slap a 100% tariff "on any and all Movies coming into our Country that are produced in Foreign Lands."

"The Movie Industry in America is DYING a very fast death," he wrote, complaining that other countries "are offering all sorts of incentives to draw" filmmakers and studios away from the US "This is a concerted effort by other Nations and, therefore, a National Security threat. It is, in addition to everything else, messaging and propaganda!"

It wasn't immediately clear how any such tariff on international productions could be implemented. It's common for both large and smaller films to include production both in the US and other countries. Big-budget movies like the upcoming "Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning" for instance, are shot around the world.

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### CROWD CONTROL ALARM SOUNDED TWO DAYS BEFORE ZATRA

The meeting was attended by then Superintendent of Police (North) Akshat Kaushal, then Deputy Superintendent of Police (Bicholim) Jivba Dalvi, Deputy Collector (Bicholim) Bhimnath Khorjuvekar, Temple Committee President Dinanath Gaonkar, and others.

The minutes of the meeting stated, "The temple committee is asked to install CCTV at all the entry and exit points, crowded areas, near temple and Homkhand along with CCTV control room wherein adequate police staff also would be provided."

"The temple committee is also requested to make necessary arrangements with regards to maintenance of queue with proper barricading wherever required. The committee is also required to assist police in crowd control and management during the festival," the minutes further read.

When contacted, Temple Committee President Dinanath Gaonkar on Monday said there was not enough time to implement the recommendations. "You require at least 10-15 days to install these cameras. The meeting was only couple of days ahead of the festival," he said.

Gaonkar also noted that barricading was avoided based on previous instances where devotees had suffered injuries. The temple committee has already deposed before the fact-finding inquiry committee constituted by the state government, providing all relevant details, Gaonkar added.

### FIELD FIRE SMOKES RESIDENTS OUT OF TALEIGAO APARTMENTS

A 108 ambulance was called to assist, particularly for elderly individuals. A total of 30 people, including two elderly individuals aged 95 and 70, were rescued from the affected area.

Locals speculate that the fire may have been sparked by the common practice of setting dry grass alight in open fields during the summer months. The incident has raised concerns about the risks of such practices, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas.

Cecil Rodrigues, a resident of the area, expressed frustration with recurring fires in the field. "This has become a routine issue," she said. "Families are affected every year and it's becoming unbearable. We've repeatedly asked the panchayat to find a solution, but nothing has been done."

Rodrigues also highlighted the ongoing demand for a Gaushala, which residents have been requesting for the past 12 years. "There's always a solution, but there needs to be a will to address the problem," she added.

Witnesses reported that the fire initially started in a small area of the field before rapidly spreading. "At first, the fire was contained, but then it spread to almost the entire field," one eyewitness noted.

The fire has raised alarms about the safety and preparedness of local authorities to handle such emergencies, especially in residential areas with limited access for emergency vehicles. Police have been notified, and an inquiry into the cause of the fire is underway.

### ADANI IN TALKS WITH TRUMP ADMIN TO END US BRIBERY CASES

The charges include allegations that Gautam Adani offered \$265 million in bribes to Indian state officials to secure solar energy contracts.

In addition to the criminal indictment, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filed a parallel civil case. The SEC alleged that the Adanis misled American investors by failing to disclose the bribery payments during a \$750 million bond offering by Adani Green Energy Ltd, a renewable energy subsidiary. Authorities claimed that this amounted to securities fraud.

Former board member of Azure Power Global, Cyril Cabanes, was also named in the complaint. Cabanes was accused of facilitating the bribery operation while serving in both domestic and international capacities.

Charges brought against the Adani executives include securities fraud, wire fraud, obstruction of justice, and violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA). FCPA

is a US law that prohibits the payment of bribes to foreign officials for business advantage.

At the time, US regulators sought strict penalties, including permanent injunctions, civil fines, and bans on both Gautam and Sagar Adani from serving as directors or officers at publicly listed companies.

The Adani Group has denied all allegations. In an effort to mitigate legal and financial risks, Adani has engaged several legal and lobbying firms in the United States. One meeting reportedly took place in March, involving prosecutors from the US Attorney's Office in Brooklyn and officials from the Department of Justice, the Bloomberg report said.

Adani Green Energy also stated in April that its internal review found no evidence of non-compliance or irregularities.

### SC NOTICES TO RAINA, FOUR OTHERS OVER DISABILITY JOKES

The bench said no one can be allowed to demean anybody under the garb of the right and muffled framing guidelines on social media content concerning the disabled and people with rare disorders.

The bench asked the Mumbai Commissioner of Police to serve notice on the five influencers to ensure their presence in the court, failing which coercive action will be taken.

Justice Surya Kant said that though after this order a lot of people raising the issue of fundamental rights will start writing articles but the court knows how to deal with these issues.

Earlier this year, Raina was booked by Maharashtra and Assam police over derogatory comments on his YouTube show "India's Got Latent" along with podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia.

On February 18, the top court granted interim protection from arrest to Allahbadia while calling his comments "vulgar" and saying he had "dirty mind" which put society to shame. Aside from Allahbadia and Raina, others named in the case in Assam are comics Ashish Chanchlani, Jaspreet Singh and Apoorva Makhija.

The apex court order on Monday came on a plea of an NGO alleging that the influencers have ridiculed persons having a rare disorder SMA and those suffering from disability on their show.

"The Commissioner of Police, Mumbai is directed to serve notice on respondent nos.6 to 10 and ensure their presence in court on the next date of hearing, failing which coercive steps will be taken against them to secure their presence," the bench ordered.

The bench also sought the assistance of Attorney General R Venkataramani on the PIL of NGO 'Cure SMA Foundation of India' for direction on regulating social media content concerning disabled people and persons with rare disorders.

"Having regard to the sensitivity and importance of the issue raised by the petitioner-Foundation, we request the learned Attorney General for India to assist this Court in the matter," it said.

"This is very, very damaging and demoralising. There are statutes that try to bring these people into the mainstream, and with one incident, the entire effort goes.

"You should think of some remedial and punitive action within the law against those who have indulged in such acts," the bench told senior advocate Aprajita Singh, appearing for the NGO.

Singh said that in her view this is a case of hate speech, which cannot be allowed under the Constitution.

Besides Raina, the bench issued notice to four other influencers Vipul Goyal, Balraj Paramjeet Singh Ghai, Sonali Thakkar alias Sonali Aditya Desai and Nishant Jagdish Tanwar.

### CJI BOWS OUT OF WAQF CASE

CJI Khanna will be succeeded by Justice Gavai a day after his superannuation on May 13.

"We would have loved to pursue your lordship (the CJI) as every contention has an answer. But, we cannot embarrass you because there is no time," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said while indicating the retirement of the CJI.

