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AFP



Hungarian director Balint Kenyeres during a photocall for the directors of shorts films in competition at the 78th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France

**Suriname poised for cash inflow from newly discovered oil**  
**PARAMARIBO:** Suriname, South America's smallest country, is preparing for an inflow of cash from a huge offshore oil find, with the president insisting the population will receive a direct share of the wealth. The Dutch-speaking nation of about 600,000 people expects to rake in about \$10 billion in the next decade or two, with crude extraction set to begin in 2028. Projected output is 220,000 barrels per day (bpd) – up from about 5,000 to 6,000 – in a country where one in five people live in poverty. "From 2028, we'll be an oil-producing country," President Chan Santokhi told AFP ahead of elections Sunday for lawmakers who will choose the next president.

**South Lebanon votes in municipal elections that will test support for Hezbollah**  
**BEIRUT:** Residents of southern Lebanon voted Saturday in the country's municipal elections that will test support for Hezbollah in the predominantly Shiite areas, months after the end of the destructive Israel-Hezbollah war. Hezbollah is running in an alliance with the Amal group of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, and both are expected to win mayoral races and the majority of seats in municipal councils. Both groups already won many municipalities uncontested. South Lebanon is the fourth and last district to vote in the elections since May 4. Among those who voted Saturday were Hezbollah members wounded in the September 17, 2024, explosions.

**South Korea says concerned by China's 'no-sail zone' in overlapping waters**  
**SEOUL:** South Korea has voiced concerns to China over its establishment of a "no-sail zone" in a shared area of the Yellow Sea, Seoul's foreign ministry said Saturday. The US outlet Newsweek reported Wednesday that China had barred ships from entering certain parts of the Yellow Sea, located between mainland China and the Korean Peninsula. According to Newsweek, a regional branch of China's Maritime Safety Administration declared the no-sail zone in parts of the sea's Provisional Measures Zone (PMZ) – a shared area where the two countries' exclusive economic zones overlap – until May 27. The MSA did not provide a reason, according to Newsweek, but South Korean media reported it was for "military training purposes", citing the Korea Hydrographic and Oceanographic Agency.

**Thousands remain isolated as floods ease in eastern Australia**  
**SYDNEY:** Tens of thousands of Australians remained isolated and thousands were without power on Saturday, authorities said as conditions in New South Wales eased after days of heavy rain that caused widespread flooding. Floodwaters were slowly subsiding but more than 20 emergency warnings remained in place, with the focus shifting to assessing properties and delivering supplies to cut-off communities. NSW emergency authorities estimated up to 10,000 properties had been damaged by flooding, mostly in central and northern parts of the state. Many communities were still isolated, with 50,000 people estimated to be impacted, NSW State Emergency Services (SES) said.

**Sri Lanka foils synthetic cannabis smuggling attempts**  
**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan authorities have seized nearly 60 kilograms of potent synthetic cannabis that foreigners tried to smuggle in this month in three separate cases, a customs official said Saturday. The South Asian island has long been considered a transit point for international drug smugglers, and all three suspects – from Britain, India and Thailand – could face life imprisonment if convicted. The 21-year-old British woman was arrested on May 12, with customs officers saying she was stopped with 46 kilograms (101 pounds) of kush – a synthetic drug containing powerful opioids – packed in two suitcases. "This could be the biggest drug bust at the Colombo airport in recent times," said Customs Additional Director General Seevali Arukgoda.

**Growing Arctic military presence worries Finland's reindeer herders**  
**ROVANIEMI:** A fighter jet roaring through the grey sky breaks the tranquillity of a boreal forest in northern Finland, one more sign of a growing military presence that is challenging the ability of reindeer herders to exercise their livelihood. "Military activity has increased massively here since Finland joined NATO," reindeer herder Kyosti Uutela said on a tour in Rovajarvi, the largest artillery practice range in western Europe, on a day when no ground exercises were underway. Located 100 kilometres (60 miles) from the Russian border, Rovajarvi covers an area of 1,070 square kilometres on land that also makes up part of the reindeer husbandry district that Uutela heads.

# Russia strikes Kyiv as hundreds more POWs exchanged with Ukraine

**AFP, KYIV:** A massive Russian drone and missile attack on Kyiv Saturday wounded at least 15 people, even as Russia and Ukraine continued the biggest prisoner swap since the start of Moscow's invasion. Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 14 ballistic missiles and 250 attack drones overnight, adding that it downed six missiles and 245 drones. Kyiv was "the main target of the enemy attack", the air force said in a statement. "With each such attack, the world becomes more certain that the cause of prolonging the war lies in Moscow," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on X. "Only additional sanctions targeting key sectors of the Russian economy will force Moscow to cease fire," he said. Kyiv city officials reported fires and fallen debris in several parts of the Ukrainian capital, after AFP journalists heard explosions overnight. Officials said 15 people were injured in Kyiv itself and five civilians were killed by Russian strikes in the Kharkiv and Donetsk regions. The Russian military meanwhile said Ukraine had targeted it with 788 drones and missiles since Tuesday. Dozens of drones targeting Moscow have been shot down over the past week. The attack on Kyiv came hours after Russia and Ukraine completed the first stage of a prisoner exchange agreed at talks last week in Istanbul and just before the second stage on Saturday. Russia's defence ministry said each side exchanged 307 prisoners of war on Saturday via Belarus, a Kremlin ally. It said the Russian POWs would receive psychological and medical help in Belarus before travelling on to Russia. Both sides received 390 people in the first stage on Friday and are expected to exchange 1,000 each in total. "We expect the exchange to continue tomorrow," Zelensky said. Russia has signalled it will send Ukraine its terms for a peace settlement after the swap, which is set to continue over the weekend -- without saying what those terms would be. The two enemies have held regular prisoner swaps since Russia launched its 2022 offensive -- but none have been on this scale. An AFP reporter saw some of the formerly captive Ukrainian soldiers arrive at a hospital in the northern Chernigiv region, emaciated but smiling and waving to crowds waiting outside. After they stepped off the bus, tearful relatives rushed to embrace the soldiers while others held pictures of their loved ones, hoping to find out if they had been seen in captivity. Many of the soldiers were draped in bright yellow and blue Ukrainian flags. "It's simply crazy. Crazy feelings," 31-year-old Konstantin Steblev, a soldier, told AFP after he was released following three years in captivity. Russia said it had received 270 Russian troops and 120 civilians, including some from parts of its Kursk region captured and held by Kyiv for months. US President Donald Trump earlier congratulated the two countries for the swap. "This could lead to something big???" he wrote on his Truth Social platform. Trump's efforts to broker a ceasefire in Europe's biggest conflict since World War II have so far been unsuccessful, despite his pledge to rapidly end the fighting. One of the soldiers formerly held captive, 58-year-old Viktor Syvak, told AFP it was hard to put words to his emotional homecoming. Captured in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, he had been held for 37 months and 12 days. "I didn't expect such a welcome. It's impossible to describe. I can't put it into words. It's very joyful," he said. After more than three years of fighting, thousands of POWs are held in both countries.



A local resident of a damaged building looks on following Russian strike in Kyiv, on Saturday

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### DOUBLE-TRACKING DISASTER PLAYS OUT AT ISSORCIM

Bruno Pereira's paddy fields, along with others belonging to the Pereira family, have now been rendered uncultivable after being buried with mud and debris, the locals claimed. The family, which had rejected possibly one of the highest sums being awarded by Railways for land acquisition, are now fighting an uphill battle to salvage their ancestral land which has become unusable due to these recent developments. "This is totally heartbreaking for me personally as I have seen Bruno Pereira toiling away in these paddy fields last season," said Orville Dourado Rodrigues, founder of Goencho Ekvott (GE). According to the locals, "The storm water tunnel erected by the British engineers and which was totally buried in mud by RVNL has 'opened' up with the first unseasonal rains with the mud having been washed away to the nearby bay of the Arabian Sea. People used to easily pass on to the other side, but now there is sludge of at least 40 cms." Luna Pereira, one of the landowners said he was aghast at the way his native village is being destroyed. Joao Menino, a prominent ramponkar from Hollant, Issorcim, expressed concern about his future as frequent landslides now threaten his heritage home, located directly behind the double-tracking railway project. According to residents, RVNL's belated attempts to manage stormwater at other locations have proved futile, with severe mud erosion continuing at multiple sites. Locals allege the project's hasty execution through ecologically-sensitive forest areas has not only eliminated crucial green cover but has also destroyed what they describe as "solidly built nullahs" that formed the region's flood management backbone. Affected residents claim the mud from the destroyed drainage system has washed into paddy fields below, rendering them uncultivable for at least this season. Some of these fields belong to the Pereiras, sources claimed. Local environmental activists and residents blame the railway authorities for what they term "unwarranted collateral damage" to their ecosystem, farmlands, and settlement areas. They alleged that the destruction of the century-old engineering system has left the community vulnerable to future flooding and soil erosion, with no adequate replacement infrastructure provided. The allegations highlight what locals describe as the consequences when government authorities claim such infrastructure works can proceed with no environmental damage, leaving farmers and residents to bear the cost.

### MONSOON REACHES KERALA, EARLIEST SINCE 2009: IMD

According to meteorologists, there is no direct relationship between the onset date and the total rainfall over the country during the season. The monsoon arriving early or late in Kerala does not mean it will cover other parts of the country accordingly. It is characterised by large-scale variabilities and global, regional and local features, an IMD official said. The IMD in April forecast above-normal cumulative rainfall in the 2025 monsoon season, ruling out the possibility of El Nino conditions, which are associated with below-normal rainfall in the Indian subcontinent. According to the IMD, rainfall between 96 per cent and 104 per cent of the 50-year average of 87 cm is considered 'normal'. Rainfall less than 90 per cent of the long-period average is considered 'deficient'; between 90 per cent and 95 per cent is 'below normal'; between 105 per cent and 110 per cent is 'above normal'; and more than 110 per cent is con-

sidered 'excess' precipitation. India saw 934.8 mm of rainfall in 2024, 108 per cent of the average and the highest since 2020. In 2023, it recorded 820 mm, 94.4 per cent of the average. In 2022, it saw 925 mm; 870 mm in 2021; and 958 mm in 2020, according to IMD data. The monsoon is crucial for India's agriculture sector, which supports the livelihood of about 42 per cent of the population and contributes 18.2 per cent to the country's GDP. It is also essential for replenishing the reservoirs critical for drinking water and power generation across the country.

### ROAD-DIGGING BAN CAN'T HIDE MESS ON STREETS

Sanjay Sarmalkar said, "There is no-objection to allow digging in emergency and urgent cases. But what I have noticed is that after digging, repairs are done in a haphazard manner and many times left in a state of neglect during monsoon causing inconvenience to motorists and particularly to two-wheeler riders. The authorities should tell people why road is being dug during monsoon." Christus Lopes said, "This is another order after PWD banned digging of roads from May 15. Will the government department allow digging of roads to help mega projects is to be seen. Secondly the government should make mandatory display of boards with copy of permissions given. The authorities should ensure that after digging, roads are recarpeted to avoid mishaps. Otherwise we will stop digging work because commuters face the brunt of road dug up and left unrepaired."

### JUSTICE NAGARATHNA SET TO BE FIRST WOMAN CJI

It usually accepts the recommendation if it is reiterated by the collegium. But there have been cases when the government has returned the file again or has not responded to the recommendations. Justice Nagarathna, born on October 30, 1962, is the daughter of former CJI E S Venkataramiah. She enrolled as an advocate on October 28, 1987, in Bangalore and practised in the fields pertaining to the Constitution, commerce, insurance and service. She was appointed as an Additional Judge of the High Court of Karnataka on February 18, 2008, and became a permanent Judge on February 17, 2010. She will have a tenure as an apex court judge till October 29, 2027 and may have a tenure of over one month as the first woman CJI after September 23, 2027.

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