

# India astronaut set to reach space stn this year: US envoy

**New Delhi:** An Indian astronaut is likely to reach the International Space Station (ISS) on an American mission this year, US ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said on Monday. The US diplomat also said the joint Indo-US satellite NISAR, considered the world's most expensive satellite, will be launched by year-end, reports **Surendra Singh**.

Garcetti said Indian govt has also suggested the name of the astronaut who will fly to ISS. He, however, did not reveal the name, telling a news channel, "I'll let them, you know, announce at the proper time".

In a video post, Garcetti, who completed his one year as US ambassador to India, said, "From the seabed to the stars, the US-India relationship is reaching new heights, including all the way to space where this past year we made huge strides in NISAR (Nasa-Isro SAR mission)."

# India sends relief material to flood-hit Kenya

NEW DELHI, May 14 (PTI)

INDIA on Tuesday sent fresh consignments of relief material containing 40 tonnes of medicines and other supplies for the flood-affected people of Kenya.

The HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) consignments were sent to the African nation in a military transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force.

"The second tranche of HADR material containing 40 tonnes of medicines, medical supplies and other equipment to assist flood victims leaves for Kenya. Standing up for a historical partnership, a



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(PTI)

Vishwabandhu to the world,"  
External Affairs Minister S

Jaishankar posted on X.  
The first batch of relief mate-

rials were delivered to that country last week. "The government of India is extending humanitarian assistance to the government of Kenya in the wake of devastation caused by the floods that have hit the country," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"38 out of 47 counties have been affected. An estimated 267 people have died, 188 injured and over 2,80,000 displaced," it said. The MEA said the assistance to Kenya is a reiteration of India's strong and friendly relations with the country, in the spirit of South-South cooperation and "our commitment to keep Africa on top of our priorities".



# Electoral Bonds

## Quid pro quo

between corporates, political parties

## CJI to take call on listing of plea seeking SIT probe



NEW DELHI, May 14 (PTI)

**TWO** NGOs on Tuesday urged the Supreme Court to consider listing their PIL seeking a court-monitored probe by a Special Investigation Team into alleged instances of “apparent quid pro quo” involving political parties, corporate entities and officials of investigative agencies in the electoral bonds scheme.

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Terming it a ‘scam’, the plea filed by the NGOs has sought a direction to the authorities to investigate the source of funding of ‘shell companies and loss-making companies’ which made donations to various political parties....

# India's April palm oil ~~IMPORTS~~ jump 34% on lower global prices

NEW DELHI, May 14 (PTI)

INDIA'S palm oil imports registered a 34.11 per cent jump on-year in April to 6,84,000 tonnes, buoyed by a fall in global prices, the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) said on Tuesday.

Palm oil accounted for 52 per cent of India's total edible oil imports of 13,04,409 tonnes in April, the trade body said in a statement, adding that sunflower and soybean oils import stood at 6,20,315 tonnes. Including non-edible oils, overall vegetable oil imports rose 26 per cent in April to 13,18,528 tonnes compared to 10,50,189 tonnes a year ago, it said.

Bearish global prices encour-



aged higher imports of refined, bleached and deodorized (RBD) palmolein and crude palm oil (CPO), which declined by nearly USD 100 a tonne last month, SEA said. Soybean oil prices fell USD 40 per tonne globally, while the sunflower oil rate dropped just USD 15 a tonne over the last month, it added. Among palm oils, RBD palmolein imports climbed to 1,24,228 tonnes as against 1,12,248 tonnes in the year-ago period. CPO (crude palm oil)

shipments increased 36 per cent to 5,36,248 tonnes over 3,93,856 tonnes, while crude palm kernel oil imports jumped nearly 6-fold to 23,618 tonnes from 3,990 tonnes.

For soft oils, soybean oil imports surged to 3,85,514 tonnes from 2,62,455 tonnes, though sunflower oil inflows eased to 2,34,801 tonnes from 2,49,122 tonnes. As of May 1, India held 22.45 lakh tonnes of edible oil stockpiles, SEA said.

India is the world's biggest edible oil importer. Indonesia and Malaysia are the major suppliers of RBD palmolein and CPO, while soybean oil is imported from Argentina and Brazil, and sunflower oil from Russia, Romania and Ukraine.



# 4th phase of LS poll logs 68.9% voter turnout

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**New Delhi:** The fourth phase of Lok Sabha election for 96 seats on Monday saw around 68.9% voter turnout as of Tuesday 11.30pm, which may marginally increase when the final data is released by Election Commission.

Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and Jammu & Kashmir saw higher turnout during the fourth phase, while Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal saw the steepest drop, according to data updated by EC on its voter turnout app.

The fourth round has seen the lowest gap compared to 2019 so far, although polling data in Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency cannot be compared given the delimitation exercise carried out. The seat in Jammu & Kashmir logged 38.5% voting, the highest since 1996.

In terms of the overall percentage, West Bengal registered the highest turnout of 80.2%, although it was lower than the 82.9% in 2019. None of the eight seats in the state, where voting took place on Monday, reported higher turnout.

In all, 46 seats recorded higher polling than 2019 with Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh recording the highest of 85.8% polling, higher than 84.2% in the last general elections.

Hindupur, also in Andhra Pradesh, registered the second highest polling at 84.7% compared with

## Provide authenticated voting record: Activists

A delegation of civil society members including activists and human rights lawyers submitted a petition to Election Commission on Tuesday demanding proactive disclosure of authenticated record of voter turnout figures for all polling stations. The letter, which has been signed by over 4,000 people, demands greater transparency in the election process. TNN

84.9% in 2019.

Out of the 17 seats in Telangana, 16 registered higher turnout with Mehboobnagar and Nagarkurnool Lok Sabha seats seeing an increase of around seven percentage points.

Data also showed that four seats in Uttar Pradesh — Farrukhabad, Kannauj, Kanpur and Kheri — had higher turnout on Monday compared to the last general election.

Ten out of 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh, where polling was held also saw marginal increase in polling. Three seats in Odisha, two in Jharkhand and seven in Maharashtra recorded more voting than 2019.

Outside Jammu & Kashmir, Hyderabad saw the lowest turnout, in line with the trend until midnight, clocking 48.5% turnout, higher than 44.8% in the last Lok Sabha polls.



# Biden sharply hikes US tariffs on Chinese EVs, cells, chips & more

## Move To Affect \$18Bn In Chinese Imports; Beijing vows Retaliation

**Washington:** US Prez Joe Biden Tuesday unveiled a bundle of steep tariff increases on an array of Chinese imports, including electric vehicles (EVs), batteries, computer chips and medical products, risking an election-year standoff with Beijing in a bid to woo voters who give his economic policies low marks. China immediately vowed retaliation. Its commerce ministry said Beijing was opposed to the US tariff hikes and would take measures to defend its interests, urging the United States to cancel the measures.

Biden will keep tariffs put in place by his Republican predecessor Donald Trump while ratcheting up others, including a quadrupling of EV duties to over 100% and doubling the duties on semiconductor tariffs to 50%, the White House said. It cited "unacceptable risks" to US economic security posed by what it considers unfair Chinese practices. "We're not going to let China flood our market with cheap goods," Biden later said.

The new measures affect \$18 billion in imported Chinese goods, including steel and aluminum, semiconductors, EVs, critical minerals, solar cells and cranes, the White House said.

The US imported \$427 billion in goods from China in 2023 and exported \$148 billion to the world's No. 2 economy, as per US Census Bureau, a trade gap that has persisted for decades and



The US is quadrupling EV duties to over 100% and doubling the duties on semiconductor tariffs to 50%

become an ever more sensitive subject in Washington. "China's using the same playbook it has before to power its own growth at the expense of others by continuing to invest, despite excess Chinese capacity and flooding global markets with exports that are underpriced due to unfair practices," Biden economic adviser Lael Brainard said.

Biden opted to increase Chinese tariffs in areas his administration has targeted for growth. The rate on Chinese solar cells will double to 50%. The rate on certain advanced batteries, along with critical minerals needed to build them, will rise to 25%. Semiconductor tariffs will double to 50%. Some of those increases will be delayed in an apparent effort to allow US firms time to ramp up production and find other sources outside China. Other tariffs will affect industries in important swing states, including heavy metals. Rates for certain imported steel and aluminum products will triple to 25%. REUTERS

## US bans Chinese bitcoin mine near N-missile base

Prez Biden on Monday ordered a company with Chinese origins to shut down and sell the Wyoming cryptocurrency mine it built a mile from a US air force base that controls nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The cryptomining facility, which operates high-powered computers in a data centre near the F.E. Warren base in Cheyenne, "presents a national security risk to the US," the prez said in an executive order, because its equipment could be used for surveillance and espionage.

The NYT reported last Oct that Microsoft, which operates a nearby data centre supporting the Pentagon, had flagged the Chinese-connected cryptocurrency mine to the federal committee on foreign investment in the US, warning that it could enable the Chinese to "pursue full-spectrum intelligence collection operations." An investigation by the committee identified risks to national security, according to the prez's order.

The order did not detail those risks. But Microsoft's report to the federal committee, obtained last year by the NYT, said, "We suggest the possibility that the computing power of an industrial-level cryptomining operation, along with the presence of an unidentified number of Chinese nationals in direct proximity to Microsoft's Data Cen-



Citing surveillance & espionage risk, the bitcoin mine in Cheyenne, Wyoming, has been ordered to cease operations immediately

tre and one of three strategic-missile bases in the US, provides significant threat vectors."

Now, the mine must immediately cease operations, and the owners must remove all their equipment within 90 days and sell or transfer the property within 120 days, according to the order, which cites the risks of the facility's "foreign-sourced" mining equipment. A vast majority of the machinery powering cryptomining operations across the US is manufactured by Chinese companies.

Cryptomining operations are housed in large warehouses or shipping containers packed with specialised computers that typically run around the clock, performing trillions of calculations per second, hunting for a sequence of numbers that will reward them with new cryptocurrency. The most common is bitcoin, currently worth more than \$60,000 apiece. NYT