

India rejects Nepal's objection to Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Lipulekh Pass

NEW DELHI, May 2 (PTI)

INDIA on Sunday trashed Nepal's objection to conduct of upcoming Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the decades-old route of Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and asserted that such "unilateral artificial enlargement" of territorial claims is "untenable".

New Delhi's sharp reaction came hours after the Nepal Foreign Ministry issued a statement strongly objecting to India and China making preparations for the annual pilgrimage via Lipulekh Pass without consulting Kathmandu, which claims the region belongs to it. Last week, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced that the annual Kailash Mansarovar Yatra will take place from June to August via two routes -- Lipulekh Pass and Nathu La in Sikkim.

The pilgrimage to Mount

Kailash and Mansarovar Lake in China's Tibet Autonomous Region holds religious significance to Hindus as well as Jains and Buddhists. The Yatra was resumed last year after a gap of nearly five years as part of efforts to normalise the relations between India and China.

"India's position in this regard had been consistent and clear. Lipulekh Pass has been a long standing route for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra since 1954 and the Yatra through this route has been going on for decades," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "This is not a new development. As regards territorial claims, India has consistently maintained that such claims are neither justified nor based on historical facts and evidence," he said. Jaiswal further added: "Such unilateral artificial enlargement of territorial claims is untenable."

4.87 cr voter turnout in TN: EC

CHENNAI, May 3 (PTI)

THE EC has released the voter turnout figure of 4.8 crore for the April 23 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.

A late Saturday night release from the Election Commission of India said that 4,87,98,833 votes were polled.

Of these, 2,52,59,596 were female voters, and 2,35,34,720 were male voters, it said.

Transgender voters accounted for 4,517. Accordingly, the total voter turnout stood at 85.10 per cent.

The EC further said that the Karur constituency recorded the highest turnout at 93.41 per cent,

2,52,59,596 were female voters, and 2,35,34,720 were male voters. Transgender voters accounted for 4,517. Accordingly, the total voter turnout stood at 85.10 pc. Karur Constituency recorded 93.41 pc, followed by Veerapandi with 93.36 pc voter turnout

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constituency in Salem district, which registered 93.36 per cent voter turnout.

The lowest turnout of 71.26 per cent was recorded in Killiyoor in Kanyakumari district.

The Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu were held on April 23, and the counting of votes will be held on May 4 from 8 am.

Counting of votes from all 75,064 polling stations, along with postal ballots, will be conducted at 62 designated counting centres across the State.

Tamil Nadu witnessed an intense three-cornered battle involving the ruling DMK, its rival AIADMK, and the new entrant TVK, led by actor Vijay.

Cabinet soon to approve Rs 37,500 cr incentive scheme to promote coal gasification projects

NEW DELHI, May 3 (PTI)

THE Cabinet is likely to approve soon a Rs 37,500 crore incentive scheme to promote coal gasification projects, aimed at boosting clean energy production and reducing import dependence, sources said.

The Coal Ministry has already prepared a Cabinet note on the scheme to promote coal gasification projects, with a financial outlay of Rs 37,500 crore, they said. The proposed scheme is aimed at accelerating surface coal and lignite gasification projects across the country, promoting self reliance by reducing import dependence on critical commodities such as LNG, urea, ammonium nitrate, ammonia, coking coal via DRI, methanol and DME, while enabling enhanced utilisation of domestic coal and lignite resources for fuels and chemicals production, and supporting the national target of 100 million tonnes coal gasi-



fication capacity by 2030.

This is a unified scheme with no categories, and the maximum financial assistance for a single project is Rs 3,000 crore, they said. In the earlier financial incentive scheme for gasification projects the Government has provided financial under three categories which included the maximum incentive of Rs 1,000 crore per project for the private sector and Rs 1,350 crore per project for the PSUs, sources said.

According to an industry analyst, the government's renewed push for coal gasification comes in the wake of recent West Asia tensions that have exposed the

country's vulnerability to disruptions in LNG, LPG and other hydrocarbon supplies, underscoring the need to diversify energy feedstock sources.

The Government is now positioning coal gasification as a strategic lever to convert domestic coal into fuels and chemicals, reduce import dependence, and strengthen energy security at a time when global supply chains remain fragile.

India has one of the largest coal reserves of 401 billion tonnes, uniquely positioning it to leverage domestic resources for reducing the dependence on imports and building a clean, resilient energy economy.

Coal remains the backbone of India's energy sector, accounting for over 55 per cent of the country's energy mix. As the second-largest producer and consumer of coal globally, India's coal consumption is expected to grow significantly as its energy demands continue to rise.

EC deploys 432 counting observers across WB

KOLKATA, May 3 (PTI)

THE Election Commission has deployed 432 counting observers (COs) across all the 294 Assembly constituencies in West Bengal to ensure transparent and smooth counting of votes on Monday.

The poll panel, in a statement, said that several districts have been assigned additional observers in view of their sensitivity and electoral significance.

While North 24 Parganas district has been allocated 49 observers for its 33 constituencies, South 24 Parganas has 45 observers for 31 seats.

Murshidabad has been assigned 33 observers for 22 constituencies, reflecting heightened monitoring arrangements.

In districts such as Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Uttar Dinajpur,

each constituency has been provided with an additional observer.

Enforcement agencies have carried out extensive seizure drives during the election period, that includes Rs 30.79 crore in cash and over 55 lakh litres of liquor valued at Rs 145.07 crore. Drugs and narcotics worth Rs 127.02 crore have also been confiscated, along with precious metals valued at Rs 37.52 crore.

In addition, freebies and other items, including foreign currency, worth Rs 189.86 crore have been seized during the period.

The EC said personnel of the State Police and the State Excise Department led the crackdown on illegal cash and liquor.

Central agencies, including the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Narcotics

Control Bureau (NCB), Border Security Force (BSF) and Customs, also played a key role in the enforcement efforts.

The Election Commission said the extensive deployment of observers, coupled with large-scale enforcement actions and

seizure reflects its commitment to ensuring free, fair and inducement-free elections in the State.

SWEET ENDING: 'MOD-ISHREE', 'JOY BANGLA' DESSERTS FLAVOUR BENGAL'S RESULT-DAY ANTICIPATION: Fish, jhalmuri and regional iden-

tity became unlikely symbols in the TMC-BJP fight for over a month. With Bengal now all agog for the EVMs to open on Monday, the state looks to cap off the bitterly fought battle with sweets drenched in the hues of every political party.

TMC dares BJP to bring full force ahead of fresh poll in Falta

KOLKATA, May 3 (PTI)

THE TMC on Sunday challenged the BJP to use its full machinery to win the Falta assembly seat, where fresh voting will be held on May 21 after the Election Commission countermanded the polls in the constituency, citing "severe electoral offences".

In a post on X, the Mamata Banerjee-led party asked the BJP to bring Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to Falta, and urged the EC to deploy 50,000 central force personnel, claiming that such measures would not have any effect on the electorate.

"Falta. Diamond Harbour.

May 21. Spare no expense. Bring everything you've got. Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, Yogi Adityanath, if you have the spine for it, come yourselves. Deploy 50,000 Central Force personnel. Line every polling booth with armoured vehicles. Fly in every 'Singham' you have at your disposal," the TMC wrote on X.

Nepal Govt cancels more than 1,500 **'politically motivated'** appointments

KATHMANDU, May 3 (PTI)

NEPAL'S new Government has effectively cancelled more than 1,500 major public appointments through a sweeping ordinance issued by President Ramchandra Paudel, local media reported.

These appointments were made before March 26 - the date marking leadership change in the country.

The Balendra Shah-led Rastriya Swatantra Party swept to power riding on the massive Opposition to the legacy parties in the country in the March 5 elections, months after the September 2025 Gen Z protests.

President Ramchandra Paudel on Saturday issued the

The provision mandates that all appointments made prior to March 26 are automatically terminated, regardless of tenure, benefits or terms of appointment

"Ordinance on Special Provisions for the Removal of Public Office Bearers, 2083" on the recommendation of the council of ministers, triggering widespread disruptions across Nepal's administrative, health and education sectors, according to 'The Kathmandu Post' newspaper.

The move aims to target politically motivated appointments made by previous governments, including the Sushila Karki-led interim government formed after the 'Gen Z' movement, according to the reports.

It is not uncommon in Nepal for incoming governments to review decisions made by their predecessors, especially appointments to influential public posts. However, the scale of the current move appears wider than usual.

The move has drawn criticism from some who warn it could disrupt the functioning of public bodies, while Government officials say it was needed to improve transparency and accountability.

OPEC+ agrees to raise oil output by 1,88,000 barrels per day in June

NEW DELHI, May 3 (IANS)

AMID the ongoing West Asia conflict, OPEC+ countries have agreed in principle to raise oil output targets in June.

Multiple reports say that seven OPEC+ countries have agreed to raise oil output targets by about 1,88,000 barrels per day next month. The output hike would rather be largely symbolic until Strait of Hormuz reopens.



This will be the third consecutive monthly increase amid the geopolitical crisis and the departure of the UAE from the group. With the UAE leaving, OPEC+ includes 21 members, including Iran.

However, only the seven nations (and the UAE) have been involved in monthly production decisions. Iran, also an OPEC+ member, has seen its own exports dwindle amid the blockade.

India's 'Drishti' satellite launched aboard SpaceX rocket

NEW DELHI, May 3 (PTI)

BENGALURU-BASED space start-up GalaxEye's Mission Drishti satellite was launched on Sunday aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket from California.

Mission Drishti is the world's first OptoSAR satellite, integrating electro-optical (EO) and synthetic aperture radar (SAR) sensors into a single operational platform, according to the company.

While EO sensors capture high-resolution images during sunlight and clear skies, SAR sensors provide all-weather and all-time images, using radar pulses.

In a statement, Suyash Singh, founder and CEO of GalaxEye, said, "With the satellite (Mission Drishti) now successfully in orbit, our immediate focus is on completing its commissioning. As we move through this phase, we are already witnessing strong global interest in the differentiated datasets enabled by our OptoSAR payload."

The satellite will help address long-stand-

PM Modi applauds launching of world's first OptoSAR satellite



ing limitations of conventional systems and enable more reliable and consistent data acquisition across diverse environmental conditions, the company said.

As a dual-use Earth observation satellite, the mission will support use cases across defence, agriculture, disaster management, maritime monitoring, and infrastructure planning. The satellite is also expected to complement India's broader initiatives, including the 29 active Earth Observation satellites outlined in ISRO's recent annual report. The launch came after five years of indigenous research and development, and extensive environmental testing and performance validation of the Mission Drishti.

In a statement, Lt Gen AK Bhatt (Retd), director general of Indian Space Association (ISpA), said, "GalaxEye has achieved what only a few global players have, which is seamlessly combining optical and SAR capabilities on a single platform to enable persistent, all-weather intelligence."

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