

Expert committee on Aravalli must consult domain experts: SC

NEW DELHI, May 25 (PTI)

THE Supreme Court on Monday said the expert committee to be constituted to define the Aravalli hills and ranges must consult domain experts and other stakeholders so that the public is heard at large.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi also said the committee cannot have a large composition as it becomes unmanageable.

"We cannot have a composition of 30 people as it will become unmanageable. The committee must consult experts, and it should have 5-7 members. We will note it in the order," the bench said.

As the hearing commenced, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, submitted that the Central Empowered Committee and the amicus curiae have given common names to be included (in the panel), which can be finalised. Senior advocate K Parameshwar, the amicus curiae, said the expert committee must take into account the stakeholders as well so that the public is heard at large.

The top court had earlier asked

the environment ministry and other stakeholders to suggest names of domain experts for the panel, which would define the Aravalli hills and ranges, the world's oldest mountain system.

On December 29 last year, the top court took note of the outcry over the new definition of the

Aravallis and kept in abeyance its November 20 directions that accepted a uniform definition of these hills and ranges.

It had also stalled all mining activities in the Aravallis.

The apex court said there was a need to resolve "critical ambiguities", including

whether the criteria of 100-metre elevation and the 500-metre gap between hills would strip a significant portion of the range of environmental protection.

On November 20, 2025, the top court accepted a uniform definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges and banned the grant of fresh mining leases inside its areas spanning Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat until experts' reports are out.

It had accepted the recommendations of a committee of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on the definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges to protect them.



India, South Korea begin next round of negotiations on upgrading trade pact

NEW DELHI, May 25 (PTI)

INDIA and South Korea on Monday began the next round of negotiations to upgrade the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which was implemented in January 2010, an official said.

The three-day talks (May 25-27) are important, as India has flagged serious concerns about the widening trade deficit between the two countries. "This is the 12th round of India-Korea CEPA upgrade negotiations," the Government official said. On April 20, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had proposed to his Korean counterpart, Yeo Han-koo, to consider negotiating a fresh bilateral free trade agreement to make it more contemporary and address concerns over the trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports.

India's exports to Korea increased 3.31 per cent to USD 6 billion in 2025-26 from USD 5.81 billion in 2024-25. The export growth was negative during 2022-25. Imports grew 1.38 per cent to USD 21.35 billion in 2025-26 from USD 21 billion in 2024-25.

EAM Jaishankar holds talks with Japanese counterpart Motegi

NEW DELHI, May 25 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Japanese counterpart Motegi Toshimitsu on Monday held wide-ranging talks focusing on economic fallout of the West Asia crisis in view of disruptions in energy supply chains.

Motegi is in New Delhi to attend a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the QUAD nations.

“India and Japan have a special strategic and global part-

nership and that signals that our ties have a larger implication, larger importance and larger impact,” Jaishankar said in his opening remarks at the meeting.

The External Affairs Minister also made a mention of Tuesday’s QUAD meeting and said it will discuss how to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific. In the talks, the two sides deliberated on bilateral cooperation, global and regional issues, especially the West Asia crisis and its impact on energy supply chains.

President confers Padma Awards, actor Dharmendra, violinist N Rajam honoured

8 dignitaries from Mah conferred with 'Padma' awards



(L to R) President Droupadi Murmu confers the Padma Vibhushan to veteran actor Dharmendra posthumously, received by BJP MP Hema Malini on his behalf. Padma Shri to Indian women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur, and Padma Vibhushan on classical musician and violinist N Rajam during a Civil Investiture Ceremony, at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, Monday. (PTI)

■ **Delhi Bureau and Agencies**
NEW DELHI, May 25

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu on Monday conferred the Padma Vibhushan on Bollywood actor Dharmendra posthumously and classical musician and violinist N Rajam at a Civil Investiture Ceremony at the



Dharmendra

Rashtrapati Bhavan here. Dharmendra's award for exceptional and distinguished service in the field of art was received by his wife and MP Hema Malini.

Rajam was honoured for her pioneering contribution to Indian classical music, especially for revolutionising violin performance through the

'GayakiAng' style that replicates vocal music on the instrument.

Murmu conferred the Padma Bhushan on Bhagat Singh Koshyari, former Uttarakhand Chief Minister; Shatavadhani R Ganesh, acclaimed polymath who revived the challenging classical Indian art form

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UCC Bill introduced in Assam Assembly; seeks to ban polygamy

GUWAHATI, May 25 (PTI)

THE Assam Government on Monday tabled a Bill on the Uniform Civil Code, seeking to ban polygamy and make registration of live-in relationships compulsory.

The Bill, however, said that it will not be applicable to any of the Scheduled Tribes residing in Assam. It proposed several punitive measures, including seven

years imprisonment for bigamy or polygamy, and three months in jail for not registering a live-in relationship.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Atul Bora tabled 'The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, 2026 Bill' in the first Assembly session of the third BJP-led NDA Government, on behalf of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The Opposition parties, including
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Assam moves resolution for one-third quota for women in Parlt, Legislatures

GUWAHATI, May 25 (PTI)

THE Assam Government on Monday moved a resolution in the Assembly for implementation of one-third reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures, after completing the delimitation process.

WCD Ajanta Neog, moving the resolution on the third day of the first session of the new Assembly, urged the unani-

mous support of the House for the reservation. "In order to honour women's power and ensure the holistic development and empowerment of women, one-third reservation for women in the Parliament of the country and in all Legislative Assemblies should be implemented with immediate effect, after completing the process of delimitation," the resolution stated.

Petrol, diesel prices raised by Rs 2.61-2.71

Hikes top Rs 7.5/litre within two weeks



A worker updates the revised prices of petrol and diesel at a petrol pump, in Nadia, West Bengal on Monday. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, May 25 (PTI)

PETROL prices were raised by Rs 2.61 a litre and diesel by Rs 2.71 on Monday, the fourth increase in less than two weeks that extended a delayed pass-through of soaring global crude oil costs triggered by the Iran conflict.

The latest increase took cumulative hikes since May

15 to nearly Rs 7.5 per litre.

In Delhi, petrol prices rose to Rs 102.12 per litre from Rs 99.51, while diesel climbed to Rs 95.20 from Rs 92.49, according to industry sources.

Fuel prices have now reached their highest levels since May 2022 after remaining largely frozen for more than two years, barring a
(Contd on page 5)

West Asia crisis not a diplomatic issue, will lead to higher fuel costs for common man: Nirmala

MUMBAI, May 25 (PTI)

HOURS after the fourth hike in pump prices for petrol and diesel in 11 days, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said that the crisis in West Asia is not just a geopolitical issue, but it will lead to higher fuel costs for the common people. Speaking at the 27th foundation day event of Sidbi here, she said the Government is sacrificing Rs 1 lakh crore of revenue by cutting the excise duties on diesel and petrol.

“The West Asia crisis is not only a diplomatic or geopolitical issue. For businesses and common people, it can mean higher fuel cost, delayed cargo, costlier shipping, shortage of inputs, pressure on working capital and uncertainty in export



orders,” the Finance Minister said. Petrol prices were raised by Rs 2.61 a litre and diesel by Rs 2.71 on Monday, marking the fourth increase in less than two weeks that extended a delayed pass-through of soaring global crude oil costs triggered by the West Asia conflict.

The latest increase brought cumulative hikes since May 15 to nearly Rs 7.50 per litre.