

CYCLONE ARNAB TURNS SEVERE

Heavy rains lash WB, Odisha, Andhra

AMARAVATI/BHUBANESWAR, Oct 27 (PTI)

ANDHRA Pradesh and Odisha have stepped up preparations, including moving people to safer locations, as “very severe” cyclonic storm Arnab hurtles towards the east coast and is expected to make landfall within the next 24 hours, officials said on Tuesday.

In its latest bulletin, the India Meteorological Department said the cyclone was over the Bay of Bengal, about 170 km south-southeast of Visakhapatnam, at 11.30 am. It is likely to move west-northwestward until evening, before crossing the coast between Bapatla and Visakhapatnam, close to Yanam, by Wednesday forenoon.

(Contd on page 5)



High tidal waves hit the coast under overcast skies, in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, on Tuesday.

(PTI)

uesday.

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Shavan, in New Delhi.

(F 11)

Israel polls: 56% voter turnout till 4 pm

JERUSALEM, Oct 27 (PTI)

NEARLY 56 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballots by 4 pm in the crucial elections on Tuesday, the highest in Israel's recorded history, as surveys predicted a tight race between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main rival, former army chief Gadi Eisenkot.

Polling stations opened across the country at 7 am local time and are scheduled to close at 10 pm, allowing 7,331,981 eligible

voters to exercise their franchise at 12,018 polling stations nationwide.

According to the Central Elections Committee, 55.7 per cent of voters had cast ballots by 4 PM, up from 47.5 per cent at the same time in the 2022 election. It is the highest turnout ever recorded at this hour. Hourly figures have been measured since 1973.

Dean Livne, the acting director general of the Central
(Contd on page 5)



BRICS adopts joint declaration; condemns Pahalgam attack

■ Delhi Bureau & Agencies

NEW DELHI, Oct 27

THE two-day conclave of the BRICS Parliamentary Forum on Tuesday adopted a joint declaration strongly condemning the 2025 Pahalgam attack and all acts of terrorism as it pledged to combat the menace in all its forms and manifestations and also stressed on non-intervention in the internal affairs of any country.

The joint declaration, announced by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, also condemned the imposition of unilateral economic and secondary sanctions saying such coercive measures have far reaching negative implications on human rights, including the right to development, health and food security of people.

The BRICS Parliamentary



From left, Egypt's former Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, China's National People's Congress Vice Chairman Zheng Jianbang and Russia's Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, Vyacheslav Volodin show the joint declaration during the 12th BRICS Parliamentary Forum, in New Delhi, on Tuesday.

(PTI)

Forum supported a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including its Security Council, saying this reform should make it more just, equi-

table, democratic, representative, effective, and efficient, better reflecting contemporary realities and the needs of the international community.

V-P HOSTS A LUNCHEON FOR BRICS MEMBERS: Noting BRICS has emerged as a vital pillar of global cooperation, Vice President of India C P Radhakrishnan has expressed that the 12th BRICS Parliamentary Forum would further strengthen dialogue, foster innovation and advance the shared vision of an inclusive and prosperous world.

Speaking at the luncheon hosted by the Vice President and Chairman of Rajya Sabha for the Presiding Officers and Heads of Delegations of BRICS member and partner countries attending the 12th BRICS Parliamentary Forum 2026 at the Samvidhan Sadan in the Parliament House Complex in New Delhi on Tuesday, Radhakrishnan highlighted India's rich democratic traditions and the timeless wisdom of its civilisational heritage.

No pressure from US to cut Russian oil imports, says Puri

NEW DELHI, Oct 27 (IANS)

INDIA has faced no pressure from the US to reduce its Russian crude imports, Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday.

Speaking at an event, the Minister noted that Middle East oil supplies have been rising as the region is able to ship out more cargoes.

"I never felt anything," he said.

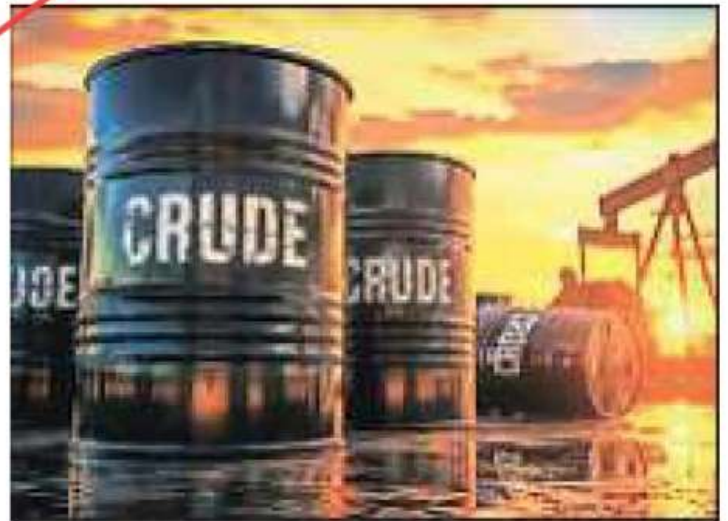
He noted that India was getting only 0.2 per cent of its oil imports from Russia before the Ukraine war, while imports surged after the war started due to discounts on Russian oil.

India's imports of Middle Eastern crude surged in September, returning to pre-war levels, while refiners cut back purchases of Russian oil amid stiff competition from China, ship-tracking data showed.

The Minister also stated that purchase of Russian oil is linked to discounts and pricing when compared with other grades. Russian oil imports have been reduced as refiners are buying more Gulf oil sold at a discount, he added.

Ultimately, every decision is anchored in self-interest, the Minister noted.

Earlier in October, US President



Donald Trump invoked national interest provisions to waive fresh sanctions, restrictions and duties on Russian energy exports under a law enacted last month, providing relief to India from potential tariffs of up to 100 per cent.

Earlier in September, Puri had said that India has navigated the recent supply-chain disruptions amid the geopolitical crises and maintained steady energy imports, reflecting the success of its energy diplomacy under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Energy security today is not simply about securing supplies; it is also about navigating conflicts, choke-points, volatile prices and sudden disruptions while keeping the country and its economy on the move," according to the Minister.

Houthis claim attacks on Saudi defence ministry

Yemen's Houthis said they fired missiles at Saudi Arabia's biggest oil refinery and defence ministry Tuesday, as shrapnel from interceptions caused damage in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia, the world's top exporter of crude, has suffered weeks of strikes by the Iran-backed Houthis against oil and civilian sites including Riyadh's international airport.

"Our armed forces targeted the Ministry of Defence in the enemy Saudi capital, Riyadh, with a ballistic missile and the hit was direct," Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said. The Houthis were also "able to target the Ras Ta-

nura refinery in the Eastern Province with a ballistic missile", he said in a separate post, adding the strike caused "massive fires".

Saudi authorities did not comment on specific targets, but said they shot down missiles over Riyadh and the Eastern Province. AFP correspondents in Riyadh heard explosions on Tuesday. A text message alert warned residents to seek shelter as blasts rattled windows in the city centre. Saudi authorities said they shot down two ballistic missiles launched towards the capital, with shrapnel hitting a building, a construction project and a car. AFP

India open to free, fair trade with China: Goyal

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Hague: India is open to promoting free and fair trade with China and hopes to expand its exports of goods and



services to the neighbouring country and Asean region in the coming years, commerce and industry

minister Piyush Goyal said late Monday, signalling scope for deeper trade engagement with Beijing.

Goyal told reporters that India believed in open trade across the world and was looking for open markets in different countries on a reciprocal basis to sell Indian goods and services. "Yes, at some stage maybe we will do that also," he said when asked if India was considering a similar exercise with China after concluding talks on a trade agreement with the European Union (EU).

The minister said he had met his Chinese counterpart

in Yaoundé, Cameroon, earlier this year and again in New Delhi during the latter's visit for the Brics summit in Sept. "We are open to working and encouraging free and fair trade with every country around the globe. We are looking to open markets in different countries on a reciprocal basis for our goods and services also," he said.

As China supplies India with a number of critical intermediate goods and important raw materials, Goyal said there was an established judicial process that could be followed if it was ever found that the pricing of a particular good was not proper. "We believe in the rules of fair play, we believe in the rules of open trade across the world. Markets are open across the world. We welcome suppliers to meet the growing needs of India," the minister said.

Asked about China's recent export controls on tunnelling equipment, which could impact several infrastr-

structure projects, Goyal said he had learnt about the move after leaving India and that govt would work on the issue.

According to commerce department data, China became India's largest trading partner in the first half of the current fiscal year, with bilateral trade between the two countries rising 10.5% to \$91.8 billion, with the trade deficit also expanding.

While India has recently implemented trade deals with the UK and New Zealand and the EU agreement is expected to open markets in 27 European countries, Goyal said talks with Chile were nearing conclusion and those with Canada were making good progress. Mexico is keen on an "early-harvest" arrangement while negotiations with the South African Customs Union have just begun. He said India was working towards securing preferential access to economies accounting for 76% of the estimated \$115 trillion global GDP.

India invites Pak for meet of SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India has invited Pakistan for the inaugural meeting of the SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum that it will host next month. PM Narendra Modi had proposed the dialogue forum during his visit to Tianjin last year for SCO summit, saying it would work to foster greater people-to-people ties and cultural understand-

ing within the grouping.

Aurungzeb Khan Khichi, minister for national heritage and culture, has been invited for the dialogue.

The Eurasian bloc continues to enjoy immunity from India-Pakistan tensions, allowing rare high-level visits from both sides even in the absence of any substantive bilateral engagement between the two co-

untries for over a decade.

The last Pakistan minister to visit India was Bilawal Bhutto in 2023 for a meeting of the SCO foreign ministers.

External affairs minister S Jaishankar travelled to Pakistan the next year for the meeting of SCO heads of govt. On both occasions, there was no bilateral meeting.

The invitation for the civilisational dialogue comes we-

eks after India sent its SCO national coordinator Alok Dimri to Pakistan for a high-level meeting to finalise the grouping's agenda and meetings in the run-up to the Islamabad summit next year. Pakistan currently holds SCO presidency and will host the heads of state summit next year. Dimri's visit was the first senior-level visit from either side since the Pahalgam terror attack.

IMD: India faced 51.5% rain deficit during Oct despite NE monsoon

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Pune: India received just 33.9mm rain against a normal of 69.9mm between Oct 1 and 26, recording a 51.5% deficit, as per IMD, even as the northeast monsoon brought rain to parts of south India.

However, the rainfall scenario in Oct could change over the next two to three days due to very severe cyclone Arnab, with Andhra, Telangana, and Odisha likely to receive good rainfall, an IMD official said. Rain could also extend to parts of the Indo-Gangetic plains after the cyclone's landfall.

The shortfall follows a 13% deficient southwest monsoon, raising concerns over the lack of a widespread rainfall recovery as the post-monsoon season progresses.

State-wise figures revealed steep deficits across parts of western and central India, but showed above-normal rain in TN and close to normal in Kerala.

Maharashtra received just 2.6mm rain against its normal of 71.1mm between Oct 1 and Oct 26, a deficit of 96.3%. Gujarat recorded 0.3mm against 18.8mm, a shortfall of 98%, MP 2.9mm against 31.3mm, Chhattisgarh 3.9mm against a normal of 58.1mm, and Odisha 16.9mm against 105.8mm.

The dry spell also hit parts of southern peninsula. Telangana received 5.2mm against 88.9mm, Andhra 68.2mm against 139mm, Karnataka 73.3mm against 118.4mm, and Kerala 268mm against 271mm. TN, however, got 217.5mm against 144.2mm, an excess of 51%.