PM opens Vizhinjam port, says capacity ramp up soon

Port to bring back 75% of India's transshipment cargo from foreign shores

SHINE JACOB
Chennai, 2 May

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who formally commissioned the Vizhinjam International Seaport in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday, said it would witness a multifold increase in capacity soon. The port, India's first transshipment hub and first deepwater container terminal, is expected to have a capacity of 5 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) annually by 2028.

During the welcome speech, state's Port Minister V N Vasavan called Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani a 'partner'. On this, in his speech at the event, which was marked by political barbs, Modi said: "A Communist minister is calling a businessman like Adani a partner. This is the face of changing India."

In a jibe at the Opposition INDIA bloc, which the Congress leads and of which the Left parties are also constituents, the PM said the presence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Congress Lok Sabha member Shashi Tharoor at the commissioning of the seaport would give "sleepless nights" to many.

"I would like to say to our chief minister, you are a big and strong pillar of the INDI Alliance. Tharoor is also sitting here, and I would like to say that today's event will take away the sleep of many," Modi said. However, the person translating his speech did not translate it properly, and it prompted Modi to say: "The message has gone across to whom it was meant". In the past couple of months, including after the Pahalgam terror attack and his praise of the PM's deft diplomacy on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, his party colleagues have accused Tharoor, the Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram, of going soft on the BJP. Congress General Secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal, who is also a Lok Sabha MP from Kerala, hit back at the PM, saying even after the Pahalgam terror attack, Modi remains fixated on "disturbing the sleep" of the opposition leaders.

The Vizhinjam port's Phase 1 capacity is designed to handle one TEU annually with an investment of around ₹8,867 crore. Of this, the Kerala government has contributed ₹5,595 crore towards connectivity and rail infrastructure. The Adani Group spent ₹2,454 crore and over ₹800 crore came as viability gap funding (VGF) from the Centre.

"The capacity of the port is also going to be increased multifold in the coming days. The world's big ships will be able to come here. So far, around 75 per cent of India's transshipment was happening outside our country. This was leading to a lot of revenue loss for us. The money that was going out will create a new economy for the country, Kerala, and Vizhinjam," Modi said.

At present, India's transshipment cargo is handled by ports such as Colombo, Singapore, Salalah (Oman), Jebel Ali (UAE), Tanjung Pelepas and Port Klang (both in Malaysia). This will be routed to India once the Vizhinjam transshipment hub is fully operational.

The port's developer and operator, Adani Vizhinjam Port Private Limited, has constructed a 3,000-metre breakwater and an 800-metre container berthing facility. Modi added that in the last 10 years, Indian ports have seen a 30 per cent reduction in turnaround time, thereby improving efficiency. The port is hardly 11 nautical miles away from the international shipping channel. Nearly 30 per cent of the country's freight movement takes place through this international shipping route south of the Indian peninsula.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi (*centre*), Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, during the inauguration of the Vizhinjam International Seaport, on Friday PHOTO: PTI

India in a sweet spot due to tariff war: Karan Adani

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) Managing Director Karan Adani on Friday said India was in a 'sweet spot' and was witnessing double-digit growth in trade amid the ongoing tariff war between the United States and China. He said the company aimed to handle 5 million twenty foot equivalent units (TEUs) at the Vizhinjam port by 2028.

APSEZ has earmarked ₹12,000 crore for capital expenditure (capex) for FY26. Of which, around ₹6,000 crore will go towards capacity expansion in Mundra, Colombo, and Dhamra ports. The remaining amount will go for expansion in logistics, marine, technology, and decarbonisation. "We believe that there is a depression in the trade of containers. However, it is depression in terms of the Europe and China perspective. For us, trade is increasing more than double digits due to the trade war. But India is in a sweet spot," he said, addressing the media after the commissioning of the port.

SHINE JACOB

Work for Andhra capital resumes

SHINE JACOB
Chennai, 2 May

Giving a fresh lease of life to Andhra Pradesh's dream capital project of Amaravati, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday laid the foundation stone and inaugurated multiple development projects worth over ₹58,000 crore for the state.

Earlier in the day, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced the country's first Quantum Valley, being built in Amaravati, would be inaugurated on January 1, 2026. "I see Amaravati as a fulfilled dream. Amaravati is a land where tradition and development walk hand in hand," the PM said, launching the new projects.

Of the ₹58,000 crore, around ₹49,000 crore is earmarked for 74 major infrastructure projects in Amaravati. This includes construction of the AP legislative assembly, secretariat, high court, and residences for judicial officers.

"Today (on Friday), we have laid the foundation stone and inaugurated works worth ₹60,000 crore. These are not just concrete structures — they are a strong foundation for the aspirations of Andhra Pradesh and the vision of a developed India. The name of Indra's capital was Amaravati — Now, Amaravati is the capital of our Andhra Pradesh. This is no coincidence; I declare it a sign of good fortune and a beginning for the construction of Swarnandhra (Golden Andhra)," he said.

Modi added that 'Swarnandhra' will strengthen the vision of a Viksit Bharat (developed India). "In the days to come, Amaravati will emerge as a leading city in the country in the fields of information technology, artificial intelligence, green energy, clean industries, education, and health care. The central government will extend full support to the state in providing necessary infrastructure and facilities to achieve this vision," he added.

PM Modi laid the foundation stone and inaugurated multiple development projects worth over ₹58,000 crore in the state

Modi said that as Gujarat CM, he used to closely monitor the works of Naidu in developing the IT sector in Hyderabad. "I studied it through officials and understood the process, and today, I'm able to implement those learnings across the entire country. In this nation, when it comes to executing large-scale projects, completing them quickly, and ensuring top-notch quality, there is no one better than Naidu."

Modi had laid the foundation stone of the project way back in 2015. However, it got stuck during the Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party government.

A senior government source told *Business Standard* that around ₹37,702 crore of the contracts for Amaravati's development, out of the total estimated cost of around ₹64,910 crore in 2024, have already been awarded. The Union government has committed ₹15,000 crore in assistance to Amaravati so far in 2024 and has facilitated support from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank with support of $800 million each.

Around 25 per cent of the ₹13,700 crore is scheduled for advance disbursement. Hudco has signed a deal to provide ₹11,000 crore loan, and discussions are in the pipeline with Germany's KfW Development Bank for another ₹5,000 crore."Between 2009 and 2014, during the time of undivided Andhra Pradesh, the state's railway budget didn't even touch ₹900 crore. Today, the central government is allocating ₹9,000 crore exclusively for Andhra Pradesh," Modi said.

India to flag Pakistan's terror role with global lenders

To voice concerns when IMF takes up a $1.3 bn loan for Pakistan next week

RUCHIKA CHITRAVANSHI
& SATARUPA BHATTACHARJYA
New Delhi, 2 May

India is not only set to red-flag the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) fresh $1.3 billion loan tranche for Pakistan, expected to be considered by its executive board on May 9, but is also gearing up to caution other global institutions and lenders like the World Bank on their engagements with its troublesome neighbour, a top government source said on Friday.

The heinous Pahalgam attack has prompted the government's top brass to ramp up the offensive against Pakistan and re-emphasise the country's role as a perennial terror sponsor at global fora. India has traditionally abstained from voting on multilateral loans to Pakistan, but last year, for the first time, it had mooted the IMF place caveats on such loans to ensure they were not used for arms purchases or defence spends, and loan repayments to other countries. "We will discuss the issue with other multilateral development banks (MDBs) and global financial institutions as well," the official source said.

Prior to the Pahalgam terror attack, India had planned to caution the IMF board when it took up the second instalment of a $7 billion loan the Fund had agreed to provide Pakistan, about the latter's plan to invest in the New Development Bank, backed by the Brics nations. Pakistan's NDB membership pitch is aimed at reducing its dependence on western lenders even as it sought to borrow billions of dollars from them, and India intended to highlight this anomaly.

After the April 22 terror attack, India posited it had cross-border linkages, and suspended the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) until "Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism". India's efforts to sensitise the IMF and other multilateral lenders of Pakistan's role as a sponsor of terrorism is part of New Delhi's non-kinetic responses to rev up the pressure on its neighbour to mend its ways. Officials in the Indian military on Friday said that since Prime Minister Narendra Modi led a top-level security review on April 29, it has become clear that India will opt for a military reprisal in addition to the diplomatic measures it has taken or announced against Pakistan.

"The message is very clear — those who planned, abetted, and executed this atrocity will face decisive consequences at a moment of India's choosing," the officials said. Even so, the Indian military has shown strategic restraint, especially in the face of "unprovoked violations" of ceasefire agreements by the Pakistan Army over the past week, the officials said. The Indian Army, has, for instance, "scrupulously avoided hasty across-the-Line-of-Control forays", they said, adding that Pakistan's nightly firings are because its security establishment wants to "mask terrorist infrastructure and provoke an Indian over-reaction".

According to other officials, the Indian military thwarted another cyberattack attempt by Pakistan-based hackers. They said the targets included the websites of two Indian Army public schools and the Army's Institute of Hotel Management. "These attempts were promptly identified and neutralised by cyber-security agencies." India and Pakistan continued to exchange small-arms fire across the LoC during the intervening night of May 1-2. The Indian Army said in a statement that Indian troops "responded in a calibrated and proportionate manner".

Meanwhile, international efforts to de-escalate the tensions between the two South Asian neighbours have continued. The UN Security Council could meet "sooner rather than later" to discuss the situation between the two neighbours, and this would be an opportunity to express views and to help diffuse tensions, Permanent Representative of Greece to the UN and UNSC President for the month of May, Ambassador Evangelos Sekeris said in New York on Thursday.

In an interview to *Fox News* on Thursday, Vice-President J D Vance said the US hopes that India would respond to the Pahalgam terrorist attack in a way that does not lead to a "broader regional conflict" and expects Pakistan to "cooperate" with New Delhi to "hunt down" militants sometimes operating from their soil. Vance and his family were in India on a four-day visit when the attack, where 26 people were killed, took place on April 22.

According to a media report from Islamabad, Pakistan is planning to issue a diplomatic notice to India against its "unilateral move" to suspend the IWT. The report quoted unnamed sources within the Indus Commission that the notice will seek concrete explanations from India for its suspension of the landmark treaty.

In a related development, Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif's YouTube channel was blocked in India on Friday. The government had earlier this week blocked 16 Pakistani YouTube channels.

The Opposition Congress on Friday evening held a meeting of its top decision making, the Congress Working Committee, where party chief Mallikarjun Kharge said the government had not come out with any clear strategy to deal with the situation arising out of the terror attack. A CWC resolution said the entire country awaits accountability, answers and justice on the Pahalgam terror attack.

The SC on Friday directed authorities not to deport to Pakistan six members of a family, who allegedly overstayed their visa, till their citizenship claim is verified. The family, which lives in Kashmir and whose sons work in Bengaluru, faced deportation to Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people lost their lives. Advocate Nanda Kishore, appearing for the family, claimed they had valid passports and Aadhaar cards.

(With agency inputs)

Pak has history with extremists: Bilawal

Pakistan has a past with extremist groups and it has suffered because of this, Pakistan Peoples Party chief Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said while answering a question on Islamabad backing terror outfits. Bhutto-Zardari was asked in an interview with *Sky News* on Thursday whether he agreed with Defence Minister Khwaja Asif's controversial remark last week. Questioned if Pakistan has been supporting, training and funding terrorists, the minister had then said his country did the West's "dirty work" for decades. His remarks come amid heightened tension between India and Pakistan after terrorists killed 26 people in J&K on April 22. PTI

কাশীপুরের ক্ষীরোদ মিত্র পার্কে শিশুমেলার উদ্বোধনে মন্ত্রী ও কলকাতার মেয়র ফিরহাদ হাকিম, মন্ত্রী শোভনদেব চট্টোপাধ্যায়, সাংসদ সুদীপ ব্যানার্জি, ডেপুটি মেয়র অতীন ঘোষ, বিধায়ক দেবাশিস কুমার। ছবি: আজকাল

৪০০ বছরের পুরনো শীতলা মন্দিরের পাশের পুকুরের মায়ের থান ঘাট উদ্বোধন করলেন বিধাননগরের মেয়র কৃষ্ণা চক্রবর্তী। এই পুকুরে স্নান করে মন্দিরে পুজো দেন স্থানীয়রা। বিধাননগরের ৫ নম্বর ওয়ার্ডে শনিবার। ছবি: আজকাল

বাসের ধাক্কায় পথচারীর মৃত্যু, গ্রেপ্তার চালক

বেসরকারি বাসের ধাক্কায় মৃত্যু হল এক পথচারীর। মানিকতলা থানা এলাকার ঘটনা। মৃত উজ্জ্বল চ্যাটার্জি (৫৬) বেলেঘাটার বাসিন্দা। শনিবার সকাল সাড়ে ৭টা নাগাদ হাডকো ক্রসিংয়ে রাস্তা পেরোচ্ছিলেন ওই প্রৌঢ়। কলকাতা থেকে শিলিগুড়ি রুটের একটি বেসরকারি বাস নিয়ন্ত্রণ হারিয়ে তাঁকে ধাক্কা মারে। গুরুতর জখম অবস্থায় পথচারীকে মানিকতলা ইএসআই হাসপাতালে নিয়ে যায় পুলিশ।