

# LS passes 2 Bills on Manipur, FM slams Opp for disruption

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

LOK SABHA on Thursday passed the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Manipur Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 2025, amid loud protests by the Opposition over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

Both pieces of legislation were cleared by voice vote without discussion.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who moved the GST Amendment Bill, described it as a “constitutional necessity” meant to implement decisions already approved by the GST Council. The Bill replaces the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

“If it doesn't pass now, the state will have difficulty in implementing the amendments which have long been approved by the Council. Their revenue will get affected because they won't have the authority to charge (tax) on certain items,” she said.

The amendment, among other changes, allows Manipur to levy state tax on undenatured extra neutral alcohol (ENA) or rectified spirit used for manufacturing alcoholic liquor for human consumption — following a 2023 recommendation of the GST Council to keep ENA outside the GST ambit.

Citing the imposition of



Lok Sabha members during the voting for the Bills. PTI



SCAN TO WATCH  
LS PROCEEDINGS

President's Rule in Manipur, Sitharaman said: “There was a GST Council decision... all states had to change in their state Acts. This was done by all states. But because Manipur was under disturbance, it could not do it through the state legislature. So an ordinance was brought. Then another ordinance was brought after it expired. After that the state came under President's Rule. That ordinance has to become law. So we are amending the State Act. It is a constitutional necessity.”

The House also cleared the Appropriation Bill to authorise expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of the State for 2025-26. Sitharaman announced an additional budgetary outlay of ₹2,898 crore for Manipur, including ₹1,667 crore for capital expenditure, ₹523 crore for rehabilitation of camp residents and ₹542 crore to

strengthen security.

Responding to Opposition sloganeering, the Finance Minister launched a sharp attack. “The Opposition keeps raising some or the other issues on Manipur. But when the government is presenting a budget for Manipur, doing something good for the state, they have no capacity or courage to listen. They shed crocodile tears for Manipur. But when we are giving money to the state, they don't want to hear. It's a shame,” she said.

As the Opposition continued to raise slogans in the Well over the SIR issue, Jagdambika Pal, who was in the Chair, repeatedly urged them to allow the House to function. “You do not want to discuss the Bill. The issue of SIR pertains to the EC and the matter is also sub judice with the Supreme Court. It can't be discussed here,” Pal said. The House was adjourned for the day soon after Bills were passed.



# PM, Nadda to choose NDA's V-P candidate, poll on Sept 9

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

THE NDA parties on Thursday authorised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president and Leader of Rajya Sabha J P Nadda to choose the ruling bloc's vice presidential candidate, even as the Election Commission kick-started the nomination process for the poll by issuing a notification.

"NDA parties will support whatever decision is taken under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi," said Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju after a meeting of the NDA parties in Parliament House building.

The NDA candidate's election to the constitutional position is a foregone conclusion as the alliance enjoys a comfortable majority in the Electoral College, which comprises members of the two Houses.

According to Rijiju, no discussion was held on the possible choices for the post.

The last day for filing nominations is August 21, and withdrawals are allowed until August 25. The election will be held on September 9 in case the Opposition fields a rival candidate. The election was necessitated following the sudden resignation of then Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on July 21. His term was to end in August 2027.

Sources said the BJP wants NDA MPs to be present when its candidate files nomination. Asked if the ruling alliance will reach out to the Opposition to evolve a consensus, Rijiju said: "There are certain conventions. If Opposition parties come and discuss with us, we will always discuss with them. But this is a constitutional process which we have to do."

Sources said a consensus candidate is unlikely as the Opposition parties are trying to put up a united face against the NDA's nominee.

Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, who chaired the meeting, Amit Shah besides Nadda and Rijiju

## SERIAL CONTESTANT AMONG FIRST THREE TO FILE NOMINATIONS

*New Delhi:* While the ruling NDA and Opposition INDIA bloc are yet to reveal their nominees for the vice presidential election on September 9, three nominations, including from a serial contestant who claims to have filed nominations for 250 different elections over the past four decades, submitted their papers as the window for filing nominations opened on Thursday. All three nominations were rejected for not complying with statutory requirements, as per a statement from the Rajya Sabha secretariat. One of those unsuccessful candidates was Dr K Padmarajan, a resident of Salem, Tamil Nadu. He told *The Indian Express* that this was the 250th election he had filed a nomination for. Starting from 1980, he said he had filed nominations for Presidential, Vice-Presidential, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and Assembly elections. He had filed nominations for the past six Presidential polls, as well as the last Vice-President election in 2022. **DAMINI NATH**

from the BJP, JD(U)'s Lalan Singh, Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde, TDP's Ram Mohan Naidu and Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu and LJP (Ram Vilas) MP Chirag Paswan were among the leaders who attended the meeting. Apna Dal (soneylal) leader Anupriya Patel and Rashtriya Lok Samta Party's Upendra Kushwaha and leaders from AIADMK were also present.

Against the maximum strength of 788, the effective strength of the two Houses is 781 as one seat is vacant in Lok Sabha and six in Rajya Sabha, including one caused by the death of former Jharkhand CM Shibu Soren. The NDA's strength is 422, 31 more than the majority mark of 391.



# Show of unity at dinner meet, Rahul serves 'vote theft' proof to INDIA bloc

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

AFTER MOUNTING an attack on the Election Commission and BJP earlier in the day accusing them of perpetrating "a huge criminal fraud" in elections, Lok Sabha leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi late evening hosted leaders of the INDIA bloc at his official residence on 5, Sunehri Bagh for a dinner meeting.

The grouping met in Delhi after more than a year, during which Gandhi gave a presentation before the leaders showing "bulletproof" evidence of "vote theft" in a Karnataka Lok Sabha constituency, similar to what he did at the press conference. Last time the leaders of the Opposition bloc met was in June after they had made significant gains in the Lok Sabha elections.

The meeting, which was attended by 50 representatives of 25 parties, signals unity among the allies, and is a step in the right direction, said leaders present at the meeting as the Opposition remained galvanised inside Parliament demanding a discussion on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound Bihar.

Present at the dinner meeting, among others, were Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra; SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, party leaders leaders Dimple Yadav, Ram Gopal Yadav; TMC's Abhishek Banerjee and Derek O'Brien; Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray; NCP (SP)'s Supriya Thale and Sharad Pawar; RJD's Tejashwi Yadav; NC president Farooq Abdullah; PDP's Mehbooba Mufti; DMK's Tiruchi



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi briefs INDIA bloc leaders regarding alleged voter fraud in New Delhi. *Express*

N Siva, CPI's D Raja; CPI(M)'s M A Baby, CPI(ML)'s Dipankar Bhattacharya and MNM chief Kamal Haasan.

Even Chief Ministers Siddaramaiah (Karnataka), Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu (Himachal Pradesh) and Revanth Reddy (Telangana) were also present.

Congress Deputy Leader in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi said that though it was not a "formal" meeting and other issues were also discussed, it was "positive", and added that the SIR issue and the revelations made by Gandhi remained the main talking points.

"The way Opposition parties have been united in Parliament in national interest and have cornered the government, the same unity was visible in the meeting as well," said Gogoi.

Asked if the upcoming vice-presidential election also came up during discussions, he said, "The main intention was that all leaders should come together...

This is not a formal meeting, different issues are likely to be taken up."

Describing the meeting as "very meaningful", CPI general secretary D Raja said, "The issue was the ongoing controversy over SIR and how the EC has been functioning, how wrong things are being done as far as enrolment and identities of voters are concerned."

"Rahul Gandhi made a powerpoint presentation and gave several examples. He also said what is happening in Bihar today can happen anywhere in the country," said Raja.

Farooq Abdullah said they raised the issue of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir, and the ban imposed on certain books in the UT, which he called "unconstitutional".

"I saw how votes have been stolen... Our concern is statehood (for J&K), we raised that issue. The statehood that was promised has not been given," he said.

EC 'shameless', it's compromising its neutrality, says Abhishek

ENS & PTI  
KOLKATA, AUGUST 7

DOUBLING DOWN on Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's attack on the Election Commission a day ago, TMC leader in Lok Sabha, Abhishek Banerjee, on Thursday accused the poll panel of compromising its constitutional neutrality and playing a "shameless role" in trying to disenfranchise genuine voters in West Bengal.

Speaking to mediapersons before leaving for Delhi to attend a dinner at Congress MP Rahul Gandhi's residence, where Opposition leaders are expected to discuss the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and deliberate on a joint vice-presidential candidate, Abhishek alleged that the EC had overstepped its constitutional boundaries to give political advantage to the BJP.

"The EC must understand and realise that it is an impartial and unbiased organisation and it has to operate within the ambit of the Constitution," Banerjee said.

Alleging that the EC has become a tool in the hands of the BJP, he said, "Now the EC has taken a role to snatch the voting rights of voters. They are going overboard. The work they have started over the past 3-4 months, when the Bengal election is still 10-11 months away, clearly shows that they are not going to let an elected government function."



# Uncertainty prevails over the cause of Uttarkashi flash flood

**Jacob P. Koshy**

NEW DELHI

Days after heavy rain triggered a flash flood and an avalanche of debris that deluged Dharali in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, uncertainty prevails over what caused the disaster.

As of Thursday, rescue and relief operations in Uttarkashi have delayed scientific investigations into the cause of the disaster.

“We are planning a reconnaissance, but, currently, accessing the sites is difficult. Rainfall data that we have from the India Meteorological Department suggests that this was not a cloudburst,” Vineet Kumar Gahalaut, Director, Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun, said. “It is possible that there is a glacier lake overflow or heavy rain triggering a landslide of accumulated silt and debris,” he said.

## Challenges persist

While cloudbursts are not unexpected given the prevailing monsoon conditions, they are challenging to forecast, and confirming them requires specific instruments, including a doppler weather radar (DWR) that can image them, as well as an automatic weather station (AWS) that can provide hourly data on rainfall, temperature, wind, and humidity. There are three DWRs in Uttarakhand, but even between them, they leave vast stretches of the Upper Himalayas unmapped. Data from the AWSs is not publicly shared.

Rainfall data from the IMD only indicates eight-hour or 24-hour rainfall data. On August 5, the day of the deluge, rainfall data for Uttarakhand showed, for instance, that Haridwar (Haridwar district) report-

## ISRO assesses damage with satellite images

BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation’s National Remote Sensing Centre has done a “rapid assessment” of the damage caused by the flash floods in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand using very high-resolution images from the Cartosat-2S satellite. “The comparative analysis of satellite images of 07.08.2025 (post-event) and available cloud-free pre-event data (13.06.2024) revealed the extent and severity of the destruction,” ISRO said. “The satellite images would help the ongoing search and rescue operations... Scientific analysis is being carried out to ascertain the cause of the triggering event,” it said.

ed 30 cm of rainfall over the previous 24 hours; Narendranagar (Garhwal Tehri district) reported 17 cm; Rishikesh (Dehradun district) 14 cm; Jolly Grant (Dehradun district) 13 cm; and Kotdwara (Garhwal Pauri district) 12 cm. While this is significant rain, it is not known whether this was concentrated over a short duration or averaged over a day.

“While the data we have so far does not indicate a cloudburst, I cannot entirely rule it out,” M. Mohapatra, Director-General, IMD, said. “It is theoretically possible there was a cloudburst in the upper reaches [of the Himalayas] where we do not have instruments. Satellite imagery and other remote sensing could provide some answers, and I believe that the National Disaster Management Agency is coordinating some investigation on it.”



# India, Russia discuss rare earths among other areas of industrial cooperation

**RAVI DUTTA MISHRA**  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

INDIA AND Russia on Wednesday discussed industrial cooperation across a range of areas, including rare earth and critical mineral extraction, as India faces increasing pressure over its purchase of Russian oil, with the US announcing an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods.

The discussions on rare earth minerals come amid China's restrictions on the export of seven rare earths, which has impacted automobile production in India. China dominates the global rare earths market, supplying 85 to 95 per cent of the world's demand.

"Both sides explored opportunities in rare earth and critical mineral extraction, underground coal gasification, and the creation of modern industrial infrastructure," the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said.

The Ministry added that key focus areas included cooperation in aerospace science and technology — such as the establishment of a modernised wind tunnel facility, production of small aircraft piston engines, and joint development in carbon fibre technology, additive manufacturing, and 3D printing.

DPIIT Secretary Amardeep Singh Bhatia and Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation, Alexey

**DPIIT Secretary  
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Gruzdev, also discussed key areas such as aluminium, fertilisers, and railway transport, alongside capacity building and technology transfer in mining equipment, exploration, and industrial and domestic waste management.

"The meeting concluded with the signing of the Protocol of the 11th Session by both co-chairs, reaffirming the strategic India-Russia partnership and shared commitment to deepen industrial and economic cooperation. The session saw participation from around 80 delegates representing both sides, including senior government officials, domain experts, and industry representatives," the Ministry said.

✓ On Wednesday, the US said it would impose an "additional 25 per cent ad valorem duty" on Indian goods, over and above the 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs an-

nounced on August 1, to "deal with the national emergency stemming from Russia's actions in Ukraine," according to a White House statement.

The additional tariffs significantly raise pressure on India, as most of its competitors — such as Vietnam, Bangladesh, and China — face lower US tariffs in the range of 19 to 30 per cent. However, India's exports in exempted categories, such as pharmaceuticals and electronics, account for nearly half of its total annual goods exports, which stand at \$80 billion.

New Delhi-based think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) noted that in 2024 alone China purchased \$62.6 billion worth of Russian oil — more than India's \$52.7 billion. Washington has avoided targeting Beijing, GTRI said, because of China's leverage over critical materials such as gallium, germanium, rare earths, and graphite, which are vital for US defence and technology.

"The US has also overlooked its allies' trade with Russia; the EU imported \$39.1 billion worth of Russian goods last year, including \$25.2 billion in oil, while the US itself purchased \$3.3 billion in strategic materials from Russia. The tariffs are expected to make Indian goods significantly more expensive in the US, with the potential to cut US-bound exports by 40–50 per cent."



# A day after Trump's 'Russian oil' tariffs, Doval meets Putin

National Security Adviser says plans for the Russian President's visit to India 'almost finalised'; hails the 'strategic and special partnership' with Russia during a 'tumultuous situation' in the world

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

**N**ational Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Kremlin on Thursday, officials here confirmed. Sources hinted at the significance of the meeting as it was held a day after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed additional tariffs on India, citing continued purchase of Russian oil by Indian entities.

Earlier, speaking to Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu, Mr. Doval said that plans for Mr. Putin's India visit were "almost finalised". During his exchanges, the NSA thanked Russia for supporting India after the Pahalagam terrorist attack on April 22, and said India's "strategic and special partnership" with Russia was of enhanced importance as the world is passing through a "tumultuous situation".



The meeting between Vladimir Putin and Ajit Doval has added significance in the context of the Trump tariffs on India. REUTERS

"We have got a very special relationship and long relationship and we highly value our strategic partnership. We have had high-level engagements and these high-level engagements have contributed very substantially. We are very excited to learn about the visit of His Excellency President Putin to India, I think the dates are almost finalised now," said Mr. Doval in his meeting with Mr. Shoigu. The Russian side, in a statement, said the

two teams discussed bilateral cooperation in "multi-lateral formats and exchanged views on topical issues of international security".

In a preparatory interaction on Wednesday, Indian Ambassador to Russia Vinay Kumar sat down with Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Colonel General Aleksandr Fomin and discussed bilateral cooperation in defence-related matters. Russian Defence Ministry said in a state-

ment that India-Russia military relationship will be "further strengthened" in the coming months. Ambassador Kumar accompanied Mr. Doval in the meeting with President Putin.

The two sides have been in discussions since the beginning of the year to firm up the details of President Putin's visit to India. Mr. Putin last visited India on December 6, 2021, when India hosted the annual summit meeting at Hyderabad House. Two-and-a-half months later, on February 24, 2022, he ordered the "special military operation" against Ukraine which started the conflict that has lingered ever since.

"The more important thing is that the summit meetings have always been a watershed points. They have always given a new direction to our relationship," said Mr. Doval to Mr. Shoigu conveying India's readiness to host the President.



# Russia is a red line for India

New Delhi will have to take a hard call: For now, economy-greasing oil from Russia, and a plan for diversification in the future



MANJEET KRIPALANI

INDIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY Advisor Ajit Doval arrived in Moscow on August 5, to discuss regional stability, counter-terrorism, energy security and defence purchases. According to reports, Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to visit India later this year. This will be Putin's first trip to India in four years. The high-level activity in the Russia-India corridor is not matched by a similar engagement in the India-US space. On August 1, President Donald Trump threatened India with 25 per cent tariffs on its exports plus additional penalties of up to 500 per cent if New Delhi didn't stop its purchases of Russian oil by August 7; on August 6, he doubled the threat to 50 per cent.

Is Russia the red line for India? It may well be. The US tariffs come at a time when India is re-entering the global commercial arena as an equal player. The country is currently negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) with six countries, including the US, having successfully closed 16 trade agreements over the last five years. The ASEAN-India FTA is being considered for review; more than two dozen countries are in line to develop trade links with India. At home, India is building its industrial capacity and developing new markets and supply chains, eyeing the China+1 space.

Discounted oil purchases from Russia have kept India's economy running, and prices stable. And Russia has been a reliable security partner. The S-400 air defence system performed admirably during India's Operation Sindoor against Pakistan. Upgraded Russian equipment is still desirable in New Delhi, especially as it comes with technology transfers and possible co-production, unlike the US with its many restrictions. Doval is likely to ask for more. India has already contracted with Russia for \$50 billion worth of military purchases over the last 20 years.

In contrast, India has bought \$24 billion in US defence equipment since 2008, and at the Modi-Trump meeting in Washington in February, a promise to buy more was made. India's own domestic defence industry is catching up; it has tripled in value to \$14 billion over the past decade, and is rapidly ramping up. Already 65 per cent of defence equipment is made domestically, compared to a 65 per cent import dependence from 10 years ago.

The allure of Russia for India has increased since Trump made nice with Pakistan immediately after Operation Sindoor, and the tariff threats have intensified public opinion in Moscow's favour. This is a good time then, for India and Russia to accommodate each other.

Putin the strategist sees India cornered

by Washington, and will play to it. Russia has some frustrations with India which will be conveyed to NSA Doval. First, though bilateral trade has reached a record \$68.7 billion, over 90 per cent of it is oil, and India runs a massive deficit with Moscow. Second, US and EU sanctions against Russia have forced the rupee-rouble trade practice back into the bilateral, and now 90 per cent of all India-Russia trade is in local currencies. Russians are unable to invest much in India, as Moscow needs funds to run its own war-time economy. Third, on the Ukraine war, Russia has been less than happy with India's make-peace-not-war statements.

Regionally, though Russia has managed to separate its historical proximity with India from its new and deep friendship with China, at the SCO, there are clear sides: Russia-China-Central Asia on one side, with India being the outlier. Bilaterally, India has specific needs from Russia, viz defence equipment. India would like to buy more, but Moscow is using large quantities of its production for the Ukraine war.

It doesn't compare with India's current unhappiness with Washington. Sanctions on traditional oil suppliers like Iran and Venezuela have cut off those supplies for India, and now penalties on Russian oil threaten to do the same, destabilising India's growing economy. It has been a particularly unkind cut, as the Biden administration had

appealed to India to buy Russian discounted oil to keep energy markets steady.

Trump has been cavalier about the QUAD, which was meant to keep China in check in the Indo-Pacific. The next QUAD meeting, due to be held in India in October, may be a damp squib without the presence of the US President. Meanwhile, Trump's irritation with BRICS, which he sees as nations colluding to displace the US Dollar's dominance, will only increase as India takes the chair of the plurilateral in

2026. India has been holding off a reconvening of the Russia-India-China Trilateral, but if it does so, Trump will have one more grouse against India.

New Delhi will have to take a hard geopolitical call, and take the bargain available on the table: Economy-greasing oil from Russia for now, and a plan for future diversification. On Ukraine, India could take a stronger position, emphasising that the West acknowledge the fundamental reason for Russia's war with its neighbour. India could project a harmonious partnership with Russia, with Putin visiting New Delhi in the next few months – a sure way to infuriate Trump. That may compel India to be a grown up and take the 50 per cent tariffs hit, till a renegotiation takes place or a trade agreement to mutual US-India satisfaction comes about. It will also force Indian companies to diversify into new, non-G7 markets, and invest more in research and development at home. An all-important domestic benefit to going the Moscow way: Standing up to Trump will give PM Modi a boost just before the Bihar election.

The writer is executive director, Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations



# Australian Army Chief to visit on Aug 10 amid deepening Indo-Pacific military ties

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

**CHIEF OF the Australian Army, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, is set to visit India from August 10 to 14, during which he will hold high-level discussions with Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi and other senior officials of the Ministry of Defence.**

His visit comes four months after India's CDS travelled to Australia and held high-level meetings with Admiral David Johnston, Australia's Chief of Defence Force, and the Chiefs of Staff Committee. The talks focused on strengthening military cooperation, with emphasis on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, joint exercises, capacity building, defence tech-



**Lt General  
Simon  
Stuart**

nology exchange, and new bilateral initiatives.

According to Army sources, this visit is of strategic significance, reaffirming the growing depth of the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, particularly in the military domain, as both nations work to uphold a stable and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

India and Australia had earlier held the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in New Delhi in 2023, and the next edition is scheduled in Australia

in 2025. The Defence Policy Talks, held in July 2023 in Australia, had provided a timely platform for reviewing ongoing collaboration and identifying new areas for joint initiatives, the sources said, adding that these dialogues, along with working groups and staff-level talks, continue to drive forward-looking cooperation in capability development, logistics, interoperability, and strategic posturing in the Indo-Pacific.

"From this robust foundation, the Indian Army-Australian Army bilateral engagement has emerged as a key pillar in growing military partnership," a source said.

There has been growing operational cooperation between the Indian and Australian Armies. "Exercise AUSTRALIND, launched in 2016, remains the

flagship bilateral field training exercise between the two Armies. Focused on counter-terrorism, close-quarter battle, and joint tactical operations, it has seen active participation from Indian Army, alongside Australia's 1st Brigade," the sources said, adding that the next edition is scheduled in Australia in November 2025.

**The Army has also been an active participant in Exercise Talisman Sabre, a multinational exercise hosted by Australia.** Lieutenant General Simon Stuart's visit to India reflects the Indian Army's rising profile as a credible partner in the Indo-Pacific and its commitment to shaping collective preparedness through meaningful cooperation," a source said.



# Mending ties

India and the Philippines are showing intent in improving their relations

**T**he state visit of Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to India that ends on Friday, and his meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi provided a hard power edge to the two countries, with historical-cultural ties between them, by signing a Strategic Partnership Agreement. On his first visit to India since taking office in 2022, Mr. Marcos has taken a strong position against Chinese incursions in the West Philippine Sea, and has been keen to engage India more closely. Coinciding with his visit, the Indian Navy held its first joint maritime exercises with the Philippine Navy in the South China Sea area. The drills were criticised by China. India has consistently supported the 2016 UNCLOS tribunal arbitration award in favour of the Philippines, calling on China to respect the multilateral order in the Indo-Pacific, and Mr. Marcos appreciated this. Moreover, while India has signed dozens of such Partnership Agreements worldwide, for the Philippines, India is only its fifth Strategic Partner – after Japan, Vietnam, Australia, and South Korea. The Philippines is also the first export destination for the BrahMos missile, and Mr. Marcos is understood to have expressed interest in buying more Indian military hardware. The two sides signed agreements to enhance strategic cooperation, including an exchange of Terms of Reference for all three services and the Coast Guard. They also agreed to free up visas and begin direct flights. There is no substantial bilateral trade at present – \$3.3 billion in 2024-25 – but investments are growing as technology and pharma companies have tied up in many areas.

The Marcos-Modi meetings sent out a more comprehensive message for India's ties with South East Asia. The Philippines is the incoming chair for ASEAN in 2026, and the coordinator for the ASEAN-India comprehensive strategic partnership. The invitation to Mr. Marcos was also a way of easing relations that have been riled by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's unnecessarily abrasive remarks in June, where he called many ASEAN countries the "B-team of China", and mocked the 2009 ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA). The government has since moved to fast-track talks to revise the AITIGA, with talks in Delhi next week. India and the Philippines have separately discussed launching talks for a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), indicating India's intention to keep negotiating for a more liberalised trade regime globally even as it faces the brunt of the U.S.'s tariffs and penalties. The visit is a reminder that India's interest in peace and security in the Indo-Pacific is not restricted to the Quad grouping, and that it is mindful of strengthening ties with all the countries in the region, especially as it essays the current geopolitical turbulence with bigger global powers.



Trump calls on Intel CEO to resign over his China ties

Reuters

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday demanded the immediate resignation of new Intel CEO Lip-Bu Tan, calling him “highly conflicted” due to his ties to Chinese firms and raising questions about plans to turn around the struggling American chip icon.

“There is no other solution to this problem,” Mr. Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform, knocking shares of Intel down around 2% in early U.S. trading.

A change in leadership at Intel could pile pressure on the company, which is also a pillar of U.S. efforts to boost domestic chip-making. Last year it secured \$8 billion in subsidies, the largest outlay under the 2022 CHIPS and Science Act, to build new fabs in Ohio and other states.

Analysts debated whether Mr. Trump should be making calls on corporate leadership.

# Trump and Putin to meet next week, ‘possibly in UAE’

It seems that Russia is now more inclined to agree to a ceasefire, says Ukraine President Zelenskyy; Marco Rubio says Steve Witkoff, who met Putin in Moscow, is returning with a ceasefire proposal

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON

Donald Trump said he could meet with Vladimir Putin “very soon,” following what the U.S. President described as highly productive talks in Moscow between his special envoy and the Russian leader.

The potential summit was discussed in a call between Mr. Trump and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy that, according to a senior source in Kyiv, included NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and the leaders of Britain, Germany and Finland.

“There’s a good chance that there will be a meeting very soon,” Mr. Trump told reporters on Wednesday at the White House, when asked when he would meet the Ukrainian and Russian leaders.

He gave no indication where the meeting with Mr. Putin might take place.



**Power parley:** The upcoming meeting would be the first U.S.-Russia leadership summit since June 2021. AFP

It would be the first U.S.-Russia leadership summit since former President Joe Biden met with his counterpart in Geneva in June 2021.

Mr. Putin on Thursday said he hopes to meet with Mr. Trump next week, possibly in the UAE. Speaking of possible direct talks with Mr. Zelenskyy, Mr. Putin said he has mentioned several times that he was not against it, adding: “It is a possibility, but certain con-

ditions need to be created” for it to happen.

The Kremlin has previously said that Mr. Putin and Mr. Zelenskyy should meet only when an agreement negotiated by their delegations is close.

“It seems that Russia is now more inclined to agree to a ceasefire; the pressure on them is working. But the main thing is that they do not deceive us or the United States in the details,” Mr. Zelenskyy said

on Wednesday evening.

Mr. Trump’s phone call with Mr. Zelenskyy came after U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff met Russian leadership in Moscow earlier in the day for talks described by the Kremlin as “productive” – with Mr. Trump’s deadline looming to impose fresh sanctions over Russia’s war in Ukraine.

“Great progress was made!” Mr. Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform, adding that afterward he had briefed some European allies. “Everyone agrees this War must come to a close,” he said.

Minutes later, however, a senior U.S. official said that “secondary sanctions” were still expected to be implemented in two days’ time. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Mr. Witkoff was returning with a ceasefire proposal from Moscow that would have to be discussed with Ukraine and Washington’s European allies.



# Pak Army chief Munir expected to visit US again

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN**

ISLAMABAD, AUGUST 7

PAKISTAN ARMY chief Asim Munir is expected to visit the US this week for consultations with top American officials, his second trip to Washington since the four-day conflict with India, a media report said on Thursday.

In June, Munir travelled to the US on a rare five-day trip during which he attended a private luncheon with President Donald Trump. That meeting culminated in Trump's announcement of enhanced US-Pakistan cooperation in various fields, including an oil deal.

Field Marshal Munir is expected in the US this week for consultations with his American counterparts, Dawn newspaper reported, citing official sources.

Sources told the paper that this would be a return visit, following a trip to Pakistan by Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla, head of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), in late July.

In a press statement issued on August 4, CENTCOM recalled Gen Kurilla's recent visit to Pakistan and other countries in the region. During the visit, Gen Kurilla was also conferred the Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) by the Pakistani government.

During his previous visit to



Field  
Marshal  
Asim Munir

Washington, Munir was hosted by President Trump in an unprecedented gesture typically reserved for visiting heads of state or government.

There was no official word on the visit from Inter-Services Public Relations or Pakistan's embassy in Washington, but during his previous visit, the army chief had hinted that he expected to return to the US again later in the year.

The development comes just over a month after the US general described Pakistan as a "phenomenal partner" in counterterrorism efforts during a congressional hearing, where he also praised Pakistan's role "in promoting peace and stability" in the region. After his meeting with Trump in June, Munir had held a comprehensive and candid exchange with senior scholars, analysts, policy experts, and representatives of leading international media outlets in Washington.

His visit to the US came weeks after the four-day conflict between India and Pakistan following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

**PTI**



# Exporters to U.S. fear loss of business with 25% additional tariff

While support from the government cannot be a substitute for export orders, financial assistance is needed to tide over the crisis, say exporters

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**T**he additional 25% tariff announced by the U.S. on exports from India will result in loss of substantial business if the tariff stays, said exporters of engineering and textile products.

The U.S. is the top market for several Indian products. Exporters hope the U.S. will withdraw the additional tariff and have called for efforts to continue negotiations between the two countries.

While support from the government cannot be a substitute for export orders, the exporters do need financial support from the Union government to overcome the current situation as Indian exporters are in trouble, said an engineering exporter.

In 2024-2025, the U.S. accounted for 27% of the \$22.9 billion auto components exported from India and 7% of \$22.4 billion imports of auto components into India, said Automotive Component Manufacturers Association president Shradha Suri Marwah.

“While this [additional tariff] development presents near term headwinds, for Indian exporters, it also underscores the importance of enhancing our sector’s competitiveness, strengthening va-



**Stitch in time:** Exports of fashion garments will continue as U.S. buyers cannot identify alternative suppliers immediately. REUTERS

lue addition, and exploring new and diversified markets,” he said.

EEPC India chairman Pankaj Chadha said the increase in tariff threatens to derail the ongoing trade talks between the two countries. “We are hoping for an interim deal,” he said. Engineering exports from India to the U.S. in 2024-2025 were to the tune of nearly \$20 billion. Iron and steel products and aluminium, and electrical and industrial machinery are among the major exports.

Sudhir Sekhri, chairman of AEPC, said the U.S. is a key market for Indian ready-made garment exports, with the country holding a share of 33% in India’s total garment exports in 2024.

“While export of fashion garments will continue as it is not easy for the U.S. buyers to identify alternative suppliers immediately, export of volume products

may move out of India if the additional tariff stays. With the initial 25% tariff, some of the U.S. buyers have accepted the shipments and some negotiated for discounts,” said K.M. Subramanian, president of the Tiruppur Exporters Association. Ravi Sam, chairman of the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council, urged the government to announce a three-year moratorium on bank loans.

## Pharma exempted

Namit Joshi, chairman, Pharmexcil, said the U.S. decision to temporarily exempt Indian pharma exports from increased tariffs reiterates India’s critical role in ensuring affordable, high-quality medicines for the American population.

India supplies over 40% of generics used in the U.S. Tariffs on Indian pharma will be counterproductive as any tariff will be passed on to U.S. consumers.