

SAYS MISSILE FACILITY SYMBOL OF DEFENCE SELF-RELIANCE

Operation Sindoor was just a trailer, now BrahMos can reach all of Pakistan: Rajnath

Along with UP CM, flags off first batch of missiles from new Lucknow unit

BHUPENDRA PANDEY
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 18

DESCRIBING OPERATION Sindoor as a "trailer", Defence Minister Rajnath Singh sent Pakistan a tough message on Saturday, saying every inch of its territory was now within the reach of the BrahMos missile.

Addressing a gathering after he and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath flagged off the first BrahMos batch

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Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with UP CM Yogi Adityanath and Deputy CM Brajesh Pathak in Lucknow, Saturday. *Express*

Munir's second n-threat to India in two months: 'Response will be catastrophic'



Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 18

CAUTIONING INDIA against any "fresh wave of hostilities" while underlining that there was "no space for war in a nuclearised environment", Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir said Saturday that his country would "respond much beyond the expectations of the initiators".

Addressing cadets at the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) in Kakul in Abbottabad, Munir asked India to settle core issues and said, "We will never be intimidated nor coerced by your rhetoric and shall respond decisively, beyond proportions, to even a minor provocation without any qualms. The onus of ensuing escalations, one that may ultimately bear catastrophic consequences for the entire region and beyond, will squarely lie with India."

This is the second time in two months that Munir has issued a nuclear threat to India. In August, in an address to the Pakistani diaspora in Florida's Tampa, Munir was quoted saying "We are a nuclear nation. If we think we are

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TING NUMBERS

2025	2024	YoY change
81,093	60,979	33%
43,957	99,267	-55.7%
83,306	84,522	-1.4%
90,383	1,35,507	-33.3%

sm Board, Turkey's Tourism Ministry

came out in Pakistan's support during the conflict in May, fell drastically, according to their latest available tourism statistics.

Between the two countries, the drop in the number of visitors from India has been steeper for Azerbaijan, which saw a 56

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Afghanistan pulls out of tri-series in Pakistan after 3 players killed in attack Stand in solidarity with ACB, says BCCI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, OCTOBER 18

AFGHANISTAN CRICKET Board (ACB) has pulled out its team from participating in a tri-series in Pakistan next month, after three local cricketers died in a Pakistani military strike. In a post on X, the ACB said that following the airstrikes, it decided not to send its team to Lahore and Rawalpindi for the T20 tri-series in November, which also involved Sri Lanka.

The Pakistan Cricket Board is yet to respond to the issue, and it is unclear whether the series will go ahead with just Pakistan



(Clockwise from left) Sibghatullah, Haroon and Kabeer Agha

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● Op Sindoor was just a trailer, now BrahMos can reach all of Pak: Rajnath

manufactured in the Lucknow unit of BrahMos Aerospace Limited, Singh described the missile as a "symbol of India's growing indigenous strength".

"Our country believes that our adversaries won't be able to escape from the power of BrahMos. As far as Pakistan is concerned, now every inch of its territory is within our reach. And whatever happened during Operation Sindoor was only a trailer, my friend," he said.

"But that trailer only made Pakistan realise that if India can give birth to Pakistan, then when time comes... *ab aage mujhe bolne ki zarurat nahi hai* (I don't need to say any further)," he said.

The BrahMos played a significant role in Operation Sindoor when India struck terror sites in Pakistan and PoK and the hostilities that followed in May this year.

Singh said the delivery of four missiles on Dhanteras marked a milestone in India's defence self-reliance, while generating economic growth and employment.

"It is a matter of great pride and joy for me that the state-of-the-art BrahMos booster building is being inaugurated in Lucknow today. Just a short while

ago, I also had the privilege of planting a Rudraksha sapling in this very courtyard. We consider Rudraksha to be a part of Rudra, meaning Lord Mahadev. I pray to Mahadev that his blessings remain on this state-of-the-art facility and on our countrymen forever," he said.

Congratulating the people of Lucknow, he said, "Lucknow is not just my parliamentary constituency, but a city that resides in my soul. The sense of satisfaction and pride that one feels seeing the rapid development of the state and the capital is further deepened by this defence-related achievement today."

He praised the speed and efficiency of the Lucknow facility – inaugurated in May at a cost of Rs 380 crore over 200 acres – which manufactured and delivered the first batch of missiles in just five months.

He said it will produce approximately 100 missiles annually for the Army, Navy and Air Force, generating a turnover of Rs 3,000 crore and Rs 500 crore in GST revenue. "The speed and efficiency of this achievement sets a record and reinforces the credibility of Lucknow and Uttar Pradesh. Alongside BrahMos'

credibility, Lucknow's identity has been further strengthened."

Singh went on to emphasise BrahMos' capabilities: its supersonic speed, precision and long-range strike that make it one of the world's most advanced missile systems.

The BrahMos production, he said, strengthens the nation's economy: taxes from each missile can fund schools, hospitals, and welfare schemes.

He pointed to India's growing role in defence exports, citing recent contracts worth approximately Rs 4,000 crore with countries, including Philippines, signaling India's emergence as a global defence partner.

Expressing his gratitude to CM Adityanath for his full support and cooperation in the project, he highlighted UP's transformation under him.

Describing Lucknow as a defence, technology and industrial hub, he underscored the importance of supporting local and small-scale industries to ensure the full success of the UP Defence Corridor.

Addressing the event, Adityanath said, "Atmanirbhar Bharat is no longer just an idea, it is now a reality that's taking

shape... Today, India is attracting global attention as the fourth-largest economy."

He said India, which was once dependent on other countries for its defence needs, is not only meeting its own requirements now but also assisting friendly nations in defence supply. "This is not only a symbol of self-reliance but also a major means of employment."

He stated the dedication and technical expertise with which PTC Industries established the Strategic Material Technology Complex in Lucknow is proof that India is rapidly advancing towards self-reliance in defence production with support from the private sector. From the production of strategic materials to ready-to-fit critical components, the entire supply chain capacity has been developed.

He said all six nodes of the defence manufacturing corridor, comprising Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra, Jhansi, Aligarh and Chitrakoot, are operating at full capacity. "We have a sufficient land bank, and institutions like IIT and AKTU (Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University) are with us for technical collaboration," he said.

Munir's second n-threat to India in two months: 'Response will be catastrophic'



Pakistan
Army
chief Field
Marshal
Asim Munir

SHUBHAJIT ROY

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This is the second time in two months that Munir has issued a nuclear threat to India. In August, in an address to the Pakistani diaspora in Florida's Tampa, Munir was quoted saying "We are a nuclear nation. If we think we are

● Munir's second n-threat to India in two months

going down, we will take half the world down with us."

He has made three official trips to the US in recent times – the first was in June when he met President Donald Trump, weeks after Operation Sindoor; the second was in August for the retirement ceremony of the US Central Command commander; and the third was in September when he met Trump again at the White House, this time with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif whose was there to attend the UN General Assembly session.

In fact, the Pahalgam terror attack in April, which led to Operation Sindoor, came a week after Munir described Kashmir as Islamabad's "jugular vein" and drew a distinction between the people of India and Pakistan on religious lines. "Our religions are different, our customs are different, our traditions are different, our thoughts are different, our ambitions are different... We are

EXPLAINED

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De facto ruler

COSYING UP to the White House by offering a port in Balochistan and its minerals, Munir has effectively taken control of Pakistan, using Shehbaz Sharif as a civilian proxy. Last month, he also travelled to China for the SCO Summit where he muscled his way into Sharif's meeting with Xi Jinping. On the home front, he is struggling to put down internal strife and the conflict on the Afghan frontier.

two nations, we are not one nation," Munir said.

His remarks had drawn a

sharp riposte from India. "How can anything foreign be in a jugular vein? This is a Union Territory of India. Its only relationship with Pakistan is the vacation of illegally occupied territories by that country," the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Delhi views Munir's remarks as nuclear blackmail, part of Islamabad's policy of using the nuclear bogey. Pakistan, sources said, is widely considered to be an irresponsible nuclear-armed state, with a risk of nuclear materials or expertise reaching non-state actors.

"The international community does not trust nuclear weapons in the hands of an institution like the Pakistani military which is accountable to no one," sources said.

Sources said Islamabad has a history of rhetorical nuclear brinkmanship while simultaneously claiming the mantle of a "responsible" nuclear actor.

Calling it a source of regional instability, the sources said the central driver of nuclear instability in South Asia is a military establishment effectively "holding the nuclear button".

Sources said that "such statements indicate the possibility of further terrorist attacks, with Pakistan's missile and nuclear capabilities used as political cover".

On Saturday, Munir said, "Should a fresh wave of hostilities be triggered, Pakistan would respond much beyond the expectations of the initiators."

"With diminishing distinctions between conflict and communication zones, the reach and lethality of our weapon systems will shatter the misconceived immunity of India's geographic war-space. The deeply hurting retributive military and economic losses inflicted will be much beyond the imagination and calculation of the perpetrators of chaos and instability," he said.

Afghanistan pulls out of tri-series in Pakistan after 3 players killed in attack

Stand in solidarity with ACB, says BCCI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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● Afghanistan pulls out of tri-series

that has left dozens dead and hundreds injured.

According to reports, three cricketers, Kabeer, Sibghatullah and Haroon, who were returning home after playing a friendly match in Sharana, the capital of Paktika province, were among the casualties. Hours after the attack, the ACB said, "The Afghanistan Cricket Board expresses its deepest sorrow and grief over the tragic martyrdom of the brave cricketers from Urgun District in Paktika province, who were targeted this (Friday) evening in a cowardly attack carried out by the Pakistani regime. In this heartbreaking incident, three players alongside five other fellow countrymen were martyred, and seven others were injured. The players had earlier travelled to Sharana, the capital of Paktika province, to participate in a friendly cricket match. After returning home to Urgun, they were targeted during a gathering."

"The ACB considers this a great loss for Afghanistan's sports community, its athletes, and the cricketing family. In response to this tragic incident and as a ges-

ture of respect to the victims, the Afghanistan Cricket Board has decided to withdraw from participating in the upcoming Tri-Nation T20I Series involving Pakistan, scheduled to be played in late November," it said.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), in a statement, said "the loss of innocent lives was deeply distressing and a matter of great concern", while the International Cricket Council (ICC) said it was "appalled by the tragic deaths of three young and promising Afghan cricketers".

"The ICC strongly condemns this act of violence that has robbed families, communities, and the cricketing world of three bright talents whose only ambition was to play the sport they loved," the ICC said.

The BCCI said it "stands in solidarity with the ACB, the cricket fraternity, and the families of the departed players during this moment of profound grief and condemns this ghastly and unwar-ranted attack".

ACB's decision to pull out received widespread support from

its players. Their captain, Rashid Khan, said in a statement, "It is absolutely immoral and barbaric to target civilian infrastructure. These unjust and unlawful actions represent a grave violation of human rights and must not go unnoticed. In light of the precious innocent souls lost, I welcome the ACB's decision of withdrawing from upcoming fixtures against Pakistan. I stand with our people at this difficult time, our national dignity must come before all else."

Following Rashid's statements, there were calls asking the all-rounder to pull out of the Pakistan Super League, where he represented Lahore Qalandars in the past.

Fast bowler Fazalhaq Farooqi echoed similar statements on his Facebook page: "The massacre of innocent civilians and our domestic cricket players by these oppressors is a heinous, unforgivable crime. The killing of players and civilians is not honour — it is the deepest disgrace."

Former captain and all-rounder Mohammad Nabi posted on Facebook, "This incident is a big grief not only for

Paktika, but for the entire Afghan cricket family and nation."

In the past, citing security concerns, many countries have refused to travel to Pakistan. While most of this was in the early 2000s, after the terror attack on the Sri Lankan team in Lahore, international cricket came to a standstill in the country before it resumed in recent years.

India has refused to play any bilateral series with Pakistan due to the Indian government's stand against terror-related activities.

Both teams, however, face off in ICC and Asia Cup events, with the recent continental tournament witnessing tensions between both teams and their cricket boards.

India's T20 captain Suryakumar Yadav had decided not to shake hands with his Pakistan counterpart Salman Agha during the three matches between the two teams at the Asia Cup. India, the winners of the Asia Cup after beating Pakistan in the final, were adamant that they would not receive the trophy from Asian Cricket Council chief Mohsin Naqvi, also Pakistan's interior minister.

PAKISTAN CONDUCTS AIRSTRIKES AFTER TRUCE EXTENSION, SAYS KABUL

Afghan, Pakistani negotiators in Doha for peace talks after clashes at border

MOHAMMAD YUNUS
YAWAR & ASIF SHAHZAD
ISLAMABAD, KABUL, OCT 18

AFGHANISTAN AND Afghanistan and Pakistan were holding peace talks in Doha on Saturday, both sides said, after the South Asia neighbours extended a ceasefire following a week of fierce border clashes.

They are seeking to find a way forward after the clashes killed dozens and wounded hundreds in the worst violence between the two countries since the Taliban seized power in Kabul in 2021.

"As promised, negotiations with the Pakistani side will take place today in Doha," Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said, adding that the Kabul team led by Defence Minister Mullah Muhammad Yaqoob had arrived in Doha. Pakistan's foreign office said Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif would lead discussions with representatives of the Afghan Taliban.

"The talks will focus on immediate measures to end cross-border terrorism against Pakistan emanating from Afghanistan and restore peace and stability along the Pak-Afghan border," it said.

It was not immediately clear how long the talks would last. Officials on both sides have said they could be extended from



People pray over the bodies of victims of a Pakistani cross-border airstrike on the Argun district of Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province on Saturday. AP

Saturday, adding senior intelligence officials from both countries were part of the talks.

The ground fighting between the one-time allies and Pakistani airstrikes across their contested 2,600-km frontier were triggered after Islamabad demanded that Kabul rein in militants who had stepped up attacks in Pakistan, saying they operated from havens in Afghanistan.

The Taliban denies giving haven to militants to attack

Pakistan and accuses the Pakistani military of spreading misinformation about Afghanistan and sheltering Islamic State-linked militants to undermine its stability and sovereignty. Islamabad denies the accusations. Militants have been waging a war for years against the Pakistani state in a bid to overthrow the government and replace it with their strict brand of Islamic governance system.

On Friday, a suicide attack near the border killed seven

Pakistani soldiers and wounded 13, security officials said.

"The Afghan regime must rein in the proxies who have sanctuaries in Afghanistan and are using Afghan soil to perpetrate heinous attacks inside Pakistan," the Pakistan Army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, said on Saturday, addressing a graduation ceremony of cadets.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said in a post on X on Saturday that

CONFLICT 'EASY' TO RESOLVE: TRUMP

Washington: US President Donald Trump claimed that the conflict between the two countries will be an "easy" one for him to solve, "if" he had to solve it. While speaking to the media during a bilateral lunch with the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, on Friday, Trump said, "I do understand Pakistan attacked or there is an attack going on with Afghanistan, that's an easy one for me to solve if I have to solve that." Trump once again claimed to have saved millions of lives while assuring that he will have "success" in resolving the conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan. PTI

Pakistan had struck "verified" camps of Islamist militants along the border areas and rejected that the strikes had targeted civilians.

He said militants had attempted to launch multiple attacks inside Pakistan during ceasefire. He said more than 100 militants were killed by Pakistani security forces, the majority of them in strikes against a militant group that he said had carried out Friday's suicide attack on the military camp. REUTERS

How are India-Taliban relations changing?

Is India's Afghanistan policy changing? What did the Muttaqi visit achieve? With India deciding to reopen its embassy in Kabul, is it inching closer to recognising a Taliban-led government? Did the restrictions imposed on women by the Taliban come up during talks?

Suhasini Haidar

The story so far:

The Indian government framed the visit by Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Amir Khan Muttaqi, and the warm welcome it extended to the Taliban leader, as an outreach to the "people of Afghanistan". The visit coincided with violent clashes on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

How has India grown links with the Taliban?

After years of being seen as "too slow" to engage with the Taliban, the government has gone to considerable lengths in recent months to build ties with the group that controls Afghanistan. In January this year, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri made the first such contact, meeting Mr. Muttaqi in Dubai, and discussed increasing trade between both countries. On May 16, just days after the India-Pakistan conflict ended in a ceasefire, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke to Mr. Muttaqi over the telephone, thanking Afghanistan for its support and condolences over the Pahalgalam terror attack. In August, India approached the UN Security Council to request permission from its Sanctions Committee for a visit by the Taliban FM to India. Mr. Muttaqi is on the UNSC's consolidated sanctions list since January 2001, and requires a waiver to travel internationally. The request was denied, but when the request was repeated a month later, it came through, allowing the visit from October 9 to 16. India doesn't recognise the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan", as the Taliban that took control of Kabul in 2021 renamed it.

Even so, Mr. Jaishankar met Mr. Muttaqi with full protocol and held delegation-level meetings with him at the official venue, Hyderabad House, and

The Afghan side joined India in condemning terrorism in the region

the visitor was accorded security and hospitality any other foreign minister would receive.

What transpired during the talks?

During the talks, Mr. Jaishankar announced India's plans to upgrade its technical mission in Kabul to an embassy, and is expected to appoint diplomats to be posted there shortly. He also handed over the keys to 20 ambulances being donated to Afghanistan, and promised health infrastructure projects, water projects and humanitarian aid. For its part, the Afghan side joined India in condemning terrorism in the region and committed that it would not allow Afghan soil to be used by groups inimical to India. In 2022, UN reports said

Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba maintained camps in Eastern Afghan provinces.

Why has cooperation been enhanced?

Mr. Muttaqi's visit began just as clashes broke out between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan launched airstrikes on Kabul in retaliation for terror attacks by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) that Pakistan claims is sheltered by the Taliban. The timing suggests India is getting closer to its "enemy's enemy" in an effort to upset Pakistan with a pincer movement months after Operation Sindoor, but there are many other reasons for such an outreach. The first is to neutralise any threat from the Taliban in an increasingly volatile neighbourhood, with governments losing power to protesters; India losing stable partners in South Asia; and China making inroads. Another reason is to build connectivity for trade as land routes are closed. Pakistan refuses to allow transit trade, and the U.S. has now re-imposed sanctions for projects at Iran's Chabahar port, which was being developed by India as an alternate route. In the

broad Eurasian region, Russia has officially recognised the Taliban government, the first country to do so, and others like China, Pakistan, Iran, Gulf and the Central Asian states, that have already allowed Taliban embassies, could follow. India cannot afford to be cut out. India has also maintained that working with the regime in power is the only way for it to continue its humanitarian aid to Afghan men and women, and to secure more than \$3 billion in investments that it made between 2001-2021, when the Taliban was out of power. Four years since it took over, the Taliban regime appears stable, with little political or insurgent opposition to its control of the country, and has been able to impose a very strict form of the Islamic Sharia law, that prohibits women from education, work, forces them into burkhas, and bans them from public parks and buildings.

Despite the situation, Mr. Jaishankar's opening remarks and the joint statement contained no mention of the restrictions on women, another indicator that New Delhi has decided that the Taliban is here to stay for the foreseeable future.

Is India preparing to recognise the Taliban?

The rapid growth of Delhi's ties with the Taliban, and the setting up of an embassy in Kabul, have raised speculation that India could, like Russia, break with the UN and western countries to give recognition to the Taliban government. This may seem unlikely soon, but much will depend on the next steps New Delhi takes, and the seniority level at which it establishes the embassy. Mr.

Muttaqi said once Indian diplomats are sent to Kabul, he expects India to receive Taliban-appointed diplomats in Delhi. This will be significant, as thus far the Afghanistan embassy in Delhi has remained loyal to the previous democratically-elected Islamic Republic of Afghanistan government. As a result, they resisted Mr. Muttaqi's visit to the embassy, and at the two press conferences he held there, tried unsuccessfully, to stop the Taliban delegation from placing the black and white flags of the Emirate there. The black, green and red tricolour of the Republic is still hoisted at the front of the embassy for now, but India's decision to upgrade missions has cast a cloud over its future and that of the staff members there, who now fear for their lives. The Ministry of External Affairs did not protest when Mr. Muttaqi held a press conference on October 10, inviting nearly 20 journalists, all male, to the embassy. However, after public outrage, the Taliban delegation held a second press conference, inviting all journalists without restrictions. There, they faced hard questions on the condition of women, although Mr. Muttaqi maintained that women were "free" and girls were receiving an education in religious madrassas, statements which are clearly untrue.

Can a Taliban led-Afghanistan go from being India's enemy's enemy and become a friend?

India has much to gain from a friendly government in Kabul, with influence based on its historic friendship with the Afghan people during the 2001-2021 period. India was Afghanistan's first strategic partner; built an air corridor to increase bilateral trade; and worked on a number of development and infrastructure projects there. While the Taliban's current conflict with Pakistan will only enhance New Delhi's role, it must be remembered that the Taliban in power now have had very close ties with Pakistan's military in the past. In addition, the Taliban leadership in Kabul and Kandahar have differences, and as Afghanistan's economy continues to suffer, they may face challenges to the regime's control. For India, building a tactical relationship with Kabul is vital, but a friendship based on shared values and common worldviews seem impossible at present.



Changing ties: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Afghan counterpart Amir Muttaqi during a meeting in New Delhi on October 10. AFP

Leh Apex Body's 'silent march' foiled in Leh, street protest held in Kargil

Peerzada Ashiq

SRINAGAR

The Ladakh administration on Saturday erected barricades, imposed restrictions, and restrained the movement of members of the Leh Apex Body (LAB), thwarting a scheduled "peaceful march" held to express solidarity with the deaths that occurred during the September 24 protests.

Meanwhile, hundreds of local people held a protest march in Kargil in spite of the restrictions imposed under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita.

"Barricades were set up in the morning on one side of my residence, and police deployment on the other. The Leh administration's move to impose



The Ladakh administration announced reimposition of prohibitory restrictions under Section 163 on Friday. FILE PHOTO

restrictions was illegal and unfortunate," Chering Dorjay Lakruk, president of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, and co-chairperson of the Ladakh Apex Body, said.

The Ladakh administration on Friday evening announced the reimposition of prohibitory restrictions under Section 163, banning

the assembly of more than four persons, "following reports of potential threats to public peace and order in the area". The administration's move came after the LAB, spearheading the agitation over demands of Statehood and inclusion in the the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, had called for a "peaceful

march" and a blackout in the evening in Leh.

"We had called for a peaceful march. It was not allowed. However, members of the Ladakh Apex Body did a symbolic march up to the Shanti Stupa from Leh. No locals could join it because of restrictions," Mr. Lakruk said.

Kargil march

Meanwhile, in Kargil town, hundreds of local people and members of the Kargil Democratic Alliance, an amalgam of religious and political organisations, held a peaceful "silent march" in Kargil district and other parts, which include Drass, Sankoo, Tai Suru, Shargole, and Zaskar. Protesters, carrying placards, were seen wearing black bands and masking their mouths.

Exploring possibility of joining J&K statehood petitions in SC: Omar

NAVEED IQBAL

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 18

JAMMU AND Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Saturday that he is “seriously considering” joining the petitions filed in the Supreme Court for the restoration of statehood to the Union Territory.

“I have had conversations with very senior lawyers in J&K and Delhi about the possibility of becoming a party to this case, as chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, because I don’t think anybody else understands the disadvantages that we are put through by being a Union Territory more than I do,” Omar said during a press conference in Srinagar.

Emphasising that he is uniquely placed to join the legal battle for restoration of statehood, he explained, “I am the only person in the entire country with this experience of having been chief minister of J&K as a state and now as CM of a UT.”

Stating that the issue is being “actively discussed” with a legal team, Omar said that based on their opinion, “there is a possibility that I will make myself a party to this case as CM”.

The case was last heard in the SC on October 10, when the Bench led by Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice K Vinod Chandran gave the Centre four weeks to respond to multiple petitions seeking restoration of



J&K CM Omar Abdullah at an event in Srinagar, Saturday. ANI

statehood. The plea was filed by applicants Zahoor Ahmed Bhat, a teacher, and Khurshid Ahmad Malik, an activist.

In their plea, Bhat and Malik said, “The non-restoration of the status of Statehood of Jammu and Kashmir in a time-bound manner violates the idea of federalism, which forms a part of the basic structure of the Constitution of India.”

Meanwhile, as his government completed a year, Omar ruled out any possibility of allying with the BJP for the restoration of statehood. “Tying up with the BJP or allying with them is out of the question. We have already seen how much that has destroyed J&K. An unnecessary alliance between the PDP and the BJP in 2015 — we are still suffering the aftereffects

of that,” he said.

Saying he has no intention of repeating mistakes other people have made, Omar emphasised “if that is the deal that is to be struck with the people, then BJP should be honest. The BJP, in its manifesto and its promises to Parliament and to the SC, never said that Statehood is dependent on the BJP coming to power in J&K”.

With bye-elections for one seat each in Kashmir and Jammu on the horizon, the CM said that the National Conference will contest Budgam.

He said his party is in conversation with the Congress regarding Nagrota, and “if they wish to contest that seat,” they will have the NC’s support. He added that the Congress has sought directions from its high command to contest the seat.

At IMO, 57 nations vote for delaying framework for carbon-free shipping

Vote on implementation of the framework aimed at moving shipping industry away from fossil fuel has been postponed for a year amid U.S. President's 'outrage'; Trump administration had issued threats against countries that had supported it

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Pressured by the United States, member countries of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) postponed a vote on a strategic plan to move the shipping industry away from the use of fossil fuel and become "net-zero" by 2050.

In April, a sub-committee of the IMO approved a framework to bring in a new fuel standard for ships and a global pricing mechanism for carbon emissions. It was decided then that countries would formally vote in a meeting in October to bring these measures into force beginning 2027.

At that time, 63 countries voted 'yes' (including the 27 European Union members, Brazil, China, India, Canada, the U.K., Korea and Japan) and 16,



Contentious issue: In April, a sub-committee of the IMO approved a framework to bring in a new fuel standard for ships. AFP

including the United States, against it.

U.S. threats

While countries such as Saudi Arabia and Russia have been opposed to the framework, the United States administration since then continues to issue explicit threats against countries that had supported the framework.

Ahead of the vote in

London on Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump

posted on Truth Social: "I am outraged that the International Maritime Organization is voting in London this week to pass a global

Carbon Tax. The United States will NOT stand for this Global Green New Scam Tax on Shipping, and will not adhere to it in any way, shape, or form.

We will not tolerate in-

creased prices on American Consumers OR, the creation of a Green New Scam Bureaucracy to spend YOUR money on their Green dreams. Stand with the United States, and vote NO in London tomorrow!"

When proceedings began on October 14, deliberations reportedly became fractious. Ultimately, Singapore brought in a proposal to delay a decision for a year. Saudi Arabia proposed a vote. This resulted in 57 countries voting in favour of delay; 49 against it; and 21 not voting.

The Hindu could not confirm which way India voted.

"We regret that IMO members followed Singapore's initial proposal to delay the adoption of the framework by 12 months, which Saudi Arabia called to a vote. This is unacceptable given the urgency we

face in light of accelerating climate change," Ralph Regenvanu, Minister for Climate Change, Republic of Vanuatu, who was present at the meeting, said in a statement.

"The IMO's failure to adopt the framework this week marks a failure of this United Nations agency to act decisively on climate change. This makes the road to B  lem and beyond more difficult. But we know that we have international law on our side and will continue to fight for our people and the planet," he added.

Shipping emissions

The 2023 IMO GHG (greenhouse gas) Strategy – the umbrella framework – envisages, in particular, a minimum 40% reduction in carbon intensity of international shipping (to reduce CO₂ emissions per transport work) by 2030.

Trump again claims India will stop buying Russian oil

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump reiterated that India will not be buying oil from Russia, saying that New Delhi has already “de-escalated” and “more or less stopped” its oil purchases from Moscow.

While speaking to the media on Friday, Mr. Trump said, “India will not be buying oil from Russia, they have already de-escalated and they have more or less stopped.”

“They are pulling back. They have bought about 38% of the oil, and they won’t be doing it any more.”

India on Thursday said it is “broad-basing and diversifying” its sourcing of energy to meet market conditions, hours after Mr.



Donald Trump

Trump claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured him that New Delhi will stop procuring Russian crude oil.

Washington has been maintaining that India is helping Vladimir Putin to finance the war through its purchase of Russian crude oil.

The relations between New Delhi and Washington have been reeling under

severe stress after Mr. Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50%, including a 25% additional duty for India’s purchase of Russian crude oil. India described the U.S. action as “unfair, unjustified and unreasonable”.

Meanwhile, Mr. Trump has once again repeated his claims about resolving the war between India and Pakistan, adding that Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said, “I have saved millions of lives.”

India has consistently maintained that the understanding on cessation of hostilities with Pakistan was reached following direct talks between the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of the two militaries.

Trump tells Ukraine, Russia to ‘stop where they are’ and end the war



US President Donald Trump with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. *PTI*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 18

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump on Friday called on Kyiv and Moscow to “stop where they are” and end their brutal war following a lengthy White House meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Trump's frustration with the conflict has surfaced repeatedly in the nine months since he returned to office, but with his latest comments he edged back in the direction of pressing Ukraine to give up on retaking land it has lost to Russia.

“Enough blood has been shed, with property lines being defined by War and Guts,” Trump said in a Truth Social post not long after hosting Zelenskyy and his team for more than two hours of talks. “They should stop where they are. Let both claim Victory, let History decide!”

Later, Trump urged both sides to “stop the war immediately” and implied that Moscow keep territory it's taken from Kyiv.

‘MULTIPLIER EFFECTS IN INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY’

GST cuts passed on, spurred consumption, may show in GDP: Govt

54 items being closely monitored, says Sitharaman, ‘not in one has tax benefit not been passed on’ to consumers



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Railways and I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in New Delhi on Saturday. ANI

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 18

A SHARP jump in sales, especially of electronics and consumer goods; reduced prices for key daily-use items; all adding up to a significant push to consumption which may even reflect in the GDP numbers for financial year 2025-26 — these were some of the key gains, highlighted by the government Saturday, attributed to GST 2.0 reforms rolled out September 22.

At a joint conference named “GST Bachat Utsav,” held by Finance Minister Nirmala

	VEHICLE AND TRACTOR SALES			
	Sept 2025	Aug 2025	Sept 2024	Sept 2025 YoY change
Passenger vehicles	3,72,458	3,21,840	3,56,752	4.4%
2-wheelers	21,60,889	18,33,921	20,25,993	6.7%
3-wheelers	84,077	75,759	79,683	5.5%
Tractors	1,46,180	64,322	1,00,542	45.4%

Source: Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, Tractor and Mechanization Association

Sitharaman, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, and Information & Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, the government’s message was that

the benefits of GST rate cuts are reaching the end-consumers and these cuts have resulted in consumers increasing their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

GST cuts

purchases, which in turn, is going to be a driving force for investment.

Sitharaman said the tax reduction isn't limited to this season and the consumption story will continue. When asked whether the rise in consumption is due to pent-up demand or revenge purchases, she said: "It is important for us to understand that these tax reductions are required from the point of view of making the system a lot more nimble. Better collections mean you have greater fiscal room to give back something. So, now that the collections have improved...and we are touching close to Rs 2 lakh crore gross collections per month, there is a reason for us to cut the rate also and pass on the benefit to the consumers," she said.

The Finance Minister said that the central GST (Goods and Services Tax) formations across the country are monitoring prices of 54 daily-use items since the GST 2.0 rollout on September 22 and the tax benefit has been passed for all items except some varieties of cement.

"...54 items are being closely monitored. Not in one has the tax benefit not been passed, not even in one item...there are, of course, one or two items like high-end cement, the Portland variety, on which there is an expected rate of passing on should happen, but it is less than that rate. It's called PPC or Portland Pozzolana Cement, probably that one category which is far lesser than what should have been expected to be passed on...except for Portland variety of cement of 1 or 2 brands, all cement companies have reduced (prices), so are milk and milk-related items," she said.

"So on these 54 particular items for which we have been getting inputs from the zones, we are convinced that on every such item the benefits are being passed on," she added.

Under the next-generation GST reforms, multiple slabs — 5 per cent, 12%, 18% and 28% — were replaced with a broad two-slab structure: a merit rate of 5% and a standard rate of 18%, in addition to a special demerit rate of 40% for sin and demerit goods.

The reforms were announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech, following which the GST Council, having representatives from the states and Centre, met in the capital on September 3 to give its nod to GST 2.0 that became effective September 22.

Vaishnav said there have been record sales for electronics this Navratri which, in turn, has affected electronics manufacturing, adding that even food prices are seeing a downward trend.

"Data from retail chains shows that there has been an increase in sales by 20-25% compared with Navratri last year. For the last four months, food (items) are seeing deflation. Food prices are reducing because of the reforms in GST...demand is increasing for electronic goods which is directly impacting electronic manufacturing, which is now growing at double-digit CAGR, it is expanding very rapidly and today electronics manufacturing is giving employment to about 25 lakh persons directly. For the smartphones that go to the US, this year India has surpassed our neighbour in exporting smartphones to the US," he said, adding that the second semiconductor plant started production last week.

With this increase in consumption, Vaishnav said, these numbers may reflect in GDP figures also. "If we see last year's GDP number (for India), the GDP size is Rs 335 lakh crore, out of which Rs 202 lakh crore is consumption and investment is of Rs 98 lakh crore.

Consumption rises in a natural way every year as income grows, as country grows, but because of the GST reforms, consumption will be significantly increasing and it's very likely that the consumption will increase more than 10% this year, which means extra consumption is likely to be of Rs 20 lakh crore this year compared to last year," he said, later clarifying that the 10% growth is anticipated in nominal terms.

The increase in consumption is expected to drive a corresponding rise in investments, reinforcing the growth momentum and demonstrating how GST reforms have strengthened the link between consumption and investment in the economy, he said.

When asked about the resultant impact on GDP growth figure,

which the government has projected to be 6.3-6.8% for the ongoing financial year 2025-26, Sitharaman said she would not speculate on the growth number but the upward trend of consumption, one of the key engines of growth, is clear.

On criticism from the Opposition that the GST reforms are merely a course correction, Sitharaman said the government set the course for GST and implemented it. "The Opposition neither brought GST nor even dared to attempt it. What we are doing today is not a correction, but a conscious decision, a reflection of co-operation between the Central Government and the GST Council to pass on greater benefits to the people. During the Congress era, they didn't even attempt a course correction. They kept the income tax rate above 90%," she said.

Commerce & Industry Minister Goyal said that the indirect tax system impacts 140 crore Indians, and the decision to provide relief of Rs 2.5 lakh crore through both direct and indirect tax measures is unprecedented.

He said the multiplier effect of these reforms is already visible in investment, business, and industry, and as soon as the GST announcement came in, foreign investors quickly realised that this would fuel a demand surge. Asked if some e-commerce firms have not passed on the benefits of GST cut to consumers, Goyal said that normally all companies have passed on the benefits and, additionally, they have announced cash bonuses and discounts also. "But if any site or platform has not passed on the benefits...consumer affairs (department) can take action...all industry and businesses have assured me that full benefit will be passed on to consumers," he added.

On whether the tax changes have come in the backdrop of the India-US trade deal negotiations, Sitharaman said that was not the case as the GST reforms have been in the works for the last one-and-a-half years. "...whoever thought of any tariff war at that time, and several groups of ministers were working on this for one-and-a-half years, and several groups of these GoMs met again, post the Government of India's package, which was sent to the GST Council, which was sent to the

group of ministers. So these are discussed at various levels at various times. So nowhere close to the tariff war... This was waiting to happen for quite some time. It has happened now..."

On the potential revenue loss for states, Sitharaman said the Centre and states are equal partners. "Any revenue loss, the way in which it has been put, is a loss for the Centre also. Any reduction in the earnings is a reduction in the earnings of the Centre also...so the Centre is not sitting with an additional bag of resources to be able to fund states if they're not doing well. All of us are equally in it," she said.

Sitharaman shared granular data of the price changes for several items after the GST rate cuts.

For instance, while shampoo saw the GST rate come down to 5% from 18%, she said the average actual decrease in prices has been 12.36% even as they had expected a benefit of 11.02%.

Similarly, for talcum powders the reduction has been 11.77% while the intended benefit was 11.02%, prices of face powders have reduced by 12.22% while the expected benefit was 11.02%. For clinical diapers, the expected benefit was 6.25% but the actual decrease in price is 10.38%, she said.

Reduction has been seen for other items like table, kitchen and other household articles of iron, steel and copper, including household utensils. "The expected weighted average (benefit) to be passed on would have been actually justified to be 6.25%, but what has been actually passed on is 10.24%," she said.

For toys like tricycles, scooters, and pedal cars, the intended benefit was 6.25% but the actual decrease in price is 8.93%. For solar cookers, the benefit was 6.25%, and 6.96% has been passed on, she said, adding that the price reduction has been significant for umbrellas, where 6.25% would have been justified, but 9.19% reduction has been actually passed on.

She also cited numbers for the automobile sector sales, saying three-wheeler dispatches grew by 5.5% year-on-year to 84,077 units, which is up from 79,683 units in September 2024. She further said that two-wheeler sales were up at 21.6 lakh units in September. As per Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) data, this is up 6.7% year-on-year.