

Ladakh civil society leaders to meet Union Home Ministry officials today

Activist Sonam Wangchuk, who was released from detention in March and joined Leh Apex Body (LAB), will participate; this is the first meeting of LAB and Kargil Democratic Alliance members with top Ministry officials since February 4

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

A civil society delegation from Ladakh, including climate activist Sonam Wangchuk who was released from detention under the National Security Act on March 14, will meet Union Home Ministry officials on Friday.

This is the first meeting of members of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), the two bodies representing Leh and Kargil districts, respectively, since February 4 when a high-powered committee (HPC) meeting led by Mi-



Sonam Wangchuk, centre, along with Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance leaders at a protest for Statehood. FILE PHOTO

nister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai was held in New Delhi. The meeting had remained inconclusive.

On Friday, a sub-committee comprising Ministry

officials will meet the delegation.

This will be the first time that Mr. Wangchuk will be attending the meeting with Ministry officials.

The delegations that

had previously met did not include his name as he was only recently inducted in the LAB.

The KDA and LAB have been demanding constitutional safeguards such as Statehood and inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, thus giving it tribal status.

Ladakh, which was earlier a part of Jammu and Kashmir, became a Union Territory in 2019 following the reading down of Article 370 of the Constitution.

Steadfast on demands

Cherring Dorjay Lakruk, co-convenor of the LAB,

said they will stick to their demands that they have been raising since 2020, which include Statehood for Ladakh.

After the violence on September 24, 2025 in Leh city when four people, including a Kargil war veteran, were killed in police firing, the talks have hit a stalemate.

Ministry officials have so far only offered safeguards available under Article 371 of the constitution and insisted on strengthening the hill councils. Article 371 deals with "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions", and exists in 12 States.

Ladakh seeks belonging through representation

It is both sad and ironic that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India argues that Ladakh needs more districts rather than a legislature or stronger constitutional safeguards under the Sixth Schedule. It contends that Ladakh's sparse population, strategic sensitivity and financial dependence on the Centre make a legislature unnecessary, and instead offers administrative decentralisation through additional districts as a practical alternative.

This argument is fundamentally flawed and reflects an impoverished understanding of democracy. Not long ago, the British Empire claimed that Indians lacked the maturity and institutional capacity for self-rule – that Indians were too poor, illiterate and divided to govern themselves. It was against such paternalism that Sri Aurobindo championed the idea of Purna Swaraj, or absolute self-governance, as a matter of dignity and national selfhood. History proved the British wrong.

Yet, close to 80 years after Independence, the argument that Ladakh should be content with districts instead of a legislature echoes the same colonial logic in the language of nationalism. Must Ladakhis still prove they are sufficiently populous, profitable and capable enough to deserve political representation? Does being geographically vast, sparsely populated and strategically sensitive disqualify a region from having a legislature?

The recent announcement of five additional districts in Ladakh – Nubra, Changthang, Sham, Zaskar and Drass – has been celebrated as a major governance reform. Certainly, administrative accessibility matters in a region spread across nearly 59,000 square kilometres of high-altitude terrain. Villages separated by mountain passes and harsh winters do require local administrative presence.

But handing out districts is not democracy. Districts cannot legislate on land protection, demographic safeguards, ecological preservation, employment priorities, cultural autonomy, renewable energy negotiations, education policy or the long-term developmental vision of the region. Districts are instruments of administration. Legislatures are instruments of representation. A district magistrate implements policy. A legislature shapes the future of a people. A district reports upward to the bureaucracy. A legislature answers downward to citizens. No amount of administrative decentralisation and convenience can substitute for political agency.

Expendable electoral promises

The most troubling aspect of the present discourse is that the Government of India itself repeatedly promised constitutional safeguards to Ladakh. After the abrogation of Article 370 and the creation of the Union Territory in 2019,



Gitanjali J. Angmo

Founder of the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh, and an education reformer and public intellectual working to reimagine education, democracy, ecology and Himalayan futures through grassroots leadership and innovation

Wife of Sonam Wangchuk

Ladakh's democratic aspirations cannot be reduced to the administrative convenience of districts

assurances regarding Sixth Schedule protections were publicly articulated by leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and reflected in their election manifestoes for the MP and Hill Council elections in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

Yet, once the elections were over, and the party won based on these very manifestoes, it went back on its commitments, raising ethical questions: Can promises made to frontier populations become expendable after elections?

The case of the northeast

What of the objections themselves? Take the first one – that Ladakh is too strategic a border to be treated with self-government. Arunachal Pradesh shares one of India's most sensitive borders with China. It is geographically vast, sparsely populated, strategically critical and financially dependent on the Centre. Yet, when it was granted full statehood in 1987, its strategic location was not viewed as a security risk, but as a strategic necessity. India understood that border populations cannot be held merely through bureaucratic administration or military presence. The people who feel politically enfranchised and constitutionally respected defend a nation more fiercely than people who merely live inside its lines. If strategic sensitivity was an argument for empowerment in one Himalayan frontier, by what logic does it become an argument against it in another?

The same applies to much of the Northeast. When Nagaland was granted statehood in 1963, its population was barely around 3.5 lakh. Mizoram became a State in 1987 with a population of roughly five lakh. Sikkim entered the Indian Union as a state in 1975 with a population of barely two lakh. Arunachal Pradesh then had roughly six lakh people at the time of statehood. None of these States was financially self-sufficient. Many remain substantially dependent on central transfers even today. India did not tell them that they were too small, or too poor, or too remote for a legislature. It understood that you do not integrate a frontier through subsidy and garrison alone. You integrate it through belonging.

Which brings us to the fiscal objection – the weakest of the three. Ladakh, we are told, cannot generate enough revenue to sustain itself. But since when has fiscal solvency become the price of admission to Indian democracy? India's federal structure is built on redistribution; the Finance Commission exists precisely because some States earn more than others and the Union shares it out. Even large States depend heavily on central devolution.

Uttar Pradesh, the most populous State, draws enormous sums from the Centre through tax devolution, central schemes and grants-in-aid. Bihar, Assam and several Northeastern States also rely heavily on central transfers (between 70%

and 90% of their expenditure) to bridge developmental gaps.

In many of these States, mountainous terrain, sparse populations and strategic constraints limit conventional revenue generation. Yet, no one would argue that Uttar Pradesh should surrender its legislature because it depends on central funds. The suggestion would be absurd.

Democracy in India has never been a reward for profitability – and if it were, much of the country would fail the test.

Ladakh needs its own voice

And Ladakhis are worth hearing – especially when the same establishment that calls Ladakh economically negligible is planning some of India's largest energy infrastructure projects on its land. The renewable energy project in the Pang region of Changthang is expected to generate nearly 13 gigawatts of power, spread across acres of high-altitude pastureland. With investments of around ₹50,000 crore and a potential of ₹7,000 crore of annual income, this is hardly the arithmetic of an insignificant region. It is the arithmetic of a region that is central to India's energy future.

Ladakhis are increasingly watching decisions being made on solar parks, transmission corridors, mining, tourism expansion and land use. The real question, then, is who negotiates the terms of this transformation. Who decides land rights, grazing rights for Changpa herders, ecological limits, local jobs, royalties and inter-generational sustainability? A district officer cannot answer these questions. Nor was he ever meant to. That is the role of a legislature – made up of representatives accountable to the people whose lives are being shaped by these decisions.

This is what the argument ultimately comes down to. India's greatness was never administrative tidiness, but the constitutional imagination to hold staggering difference within one Union without flattening it. That same imagination produced the Sixth Schedule, recognising that fragile and distinct frontier regions need protections the plains do not. Uniformity is not equity. And Ladakh is not asking to belong to India less; it is asking to belong more fully – not as a territory administered from afar, but as a people shaping their own future. That distinction matters.

Sri Aurobindo wrote that freedom is the necessary atmosphere for a nation's soul to grow. India's spirit has often been strongest at its edges – in places that chose Bharat and defended it through hardship and sacrifice without asking what it cost. The strength of a republic is not measured by how tightly it controls its frontiers, but by how deeply even its farthest regions feel they belong. The voice rising from Ladakh today is not a demand for privilege, but a quiet appeal to be trusted with its own future.

India's crude oil imports decline by 4.3% in April, but bill goes up by 50%

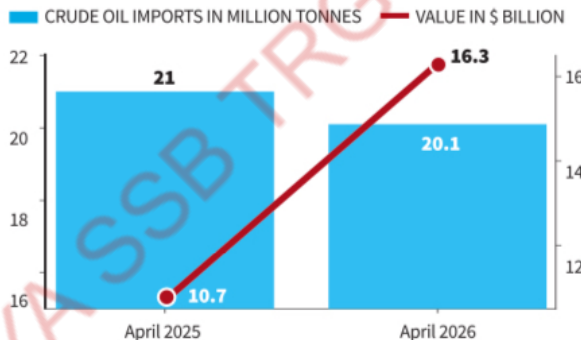
Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

The volume of India's crude oil imports fell by 4.3% in April, the second month after the start of the West Asia conflict, while the value of imports soared by about 50% over the comparable period last year, government data showed. The figures are an indication of the price pressure on crude oil and natural gas due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Notably, as per the latest data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell, the volume of imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) declined by nearly 30% in

Volume down

Volume of India's crude oil imports fell by **4.3% in April 2026**, while the value soared by **50%** over that of the corresponding month last year



April, though domestic net production of natural gas fell by 4.2% during the month. This was, however, due to lower consumption.

Overall, the net import bill for oil and gas, which is inclusive of certain deductions from India's export of petroleum products, grew

Transporters announce hike in freight rates

MUMBAI

With diesel prices increasing and fuel shortage impacting free movement of trucks, transporters have decided to increase freight rates by 4% with effect from Wednesday, to pass on the extra burden to the customers. The move was announced by the All India Transporters Welfare Association. » **PAGE 15**

by about 23% to \$13.9 billion in April.

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India's crude oil imports decline, but bill goes up

The data show that India imported 20.1 million tonnes (mt) of crude oil in April, compared with 21 mt in the comparable period last year. However, India's oil-marketing companies paid \$16.3 billion for their imports, as against the \$10.7 billion they had paid in the corresponding month last year.

Sales of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), including domestic and non-domestic and auto LPG, by public sector oil firms dipped by 12.7% on a year-on-year basis to about 2.2 mt. During the conflict, the government has allocated commercial establishments 70% of the LPG they were using before the crisis.

As for natural gas, the country consumed 4,703 million standard cubic metres (MMSCM) of natural gas in April, which was 16.7% lower than that in the corresponding month last year.

Likely as a result of this lower consumption, India imported 1,954 MMSCM of LNG in April, down from 2,778 MMSCM in April last year. In value terms, the LNG import bill fell one-fourth from \$1.2 billion to \$0.9 billion during the reported period.

India's import dependence on natural gas declined to 41.6% in April this year from 49.2% in the same month last year. The net production of natural gas, which accounts for the quantum lost due to flaring and for other reasons, dipped by 4.2% on a year-on-year basis to 2,749 MMSCM.

Transporters announce 4% increase in freight rates

To offset the diesel price hike, transporters introduce new calculation method, which will regulate the pass-on price of the increase in diesel rates, which accounts for 65% of the operational cost

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

With diesel prices increasing and fuel shortage impacting free movement of trucks, transporters have decided to increase freight rates by 4% with effect from May 20, to pass on the extra burden to the customers. This includes a 3% hike on non-diesel components and 0.65% on the diesel component.

The move, announced by the All India Transporters Welfare Association (AITWA), is expected to fuel inflation. The move, announced by the All India Transporters Welfare Association (AITWA), is expected to fuel inflation.

To offset the diesel price



Cascading effect: The hike in freight charges is expected to fuel inflation. BISWARANJAN ROUT

hike, the transporters have introduced a new calculation method called fuel adjustment factor (FAF), which will regulate the pass-on price of the increase in diesel rates, which accounts for 65% of the operational cost.

Transporters have appealed to customers to pay the extra rate so that they do not default on their loans. They have also requested customers not to impose any penalty for delayed arrival of consignments as trucks are getting

stuck due to diesel shortage in several pockets.

Since the prices of non-diesel components, i.e., toll, tyre and lubricants, have gone up, the transporters have increased the non-diesel charges by a flat 3%. This is to offset the additional burden due to the ₹3 increase in diesel price announced on the first occasion.

In the case of the diesel component, for every ₹1 increase in diesel price per litre over the base rate prevailing on May 15, 2026, there would be a 0.65% increase in freight rates, as per the FAF.

It may be recalled the first increase in diesel price was effected from May 15, which has become the base date.

Should the rupee be left to depreciate?

Following days of sustained losses, the rupee has closed at nearly ₹97 to the dollar; while some advocate letting it find its own level, there is a risk in allowing depreciation to continue unchecked, especially as rising import costs of essential goods could fuel inflation

EXPLAINER

Rahul Menon

Continuous days of sustained losses has seen the rupee close at almost ₹97 to the dollar, with no indication that the slide has been arrested. Rising oil prices and the threat of external inflation will put further pressure on the rupee in the days to come. This has prompted calls for intervention to prevent further falls.

Some writers, like Harvard professor Gita Gopinath, have resisted calls for intervention by the RBI, advocating for letting the rupee find its own level. A weaker rupee would automatically curtail imports and boost exports. Intervention would only obstruct the free flow of market forces.

While intervention does have its challenges, there is danger in letting the process of depreciation continue unchecked, especially when much of it is being driven by speculative finance. With foreign interest rates bound to rise, capital will flow out faster, leading to stronger negative pressures on the rupee. In such a scenario, it might take inordinately long for the rupee to 'find its level', and the inflationary dangers of a weak rupee will exert even more stresses on a populace already exposed to hardship as a result of worldwide spikes in energy prices.

Can intervention deepen volatility?

A current account deficit implies more imports than exports, and hence a greater need for foreign currency. If this is adequately met by foreign capital inflow to purchase assets like stocks, the rupee's value relative to the dollar will not change.

If the economy experiences a deficit without sufficient inflow of foreign capital, it faces a problem, with demand for foreign exchange exceeding available supply. Mainstream models dictate that in such a situation, the rupee must depreciate. The weaker rupee makes



GETTY IMAGES

exports more affordable and imports more expensive, leading to an automatic adjustment of the current account deficit relative to the available inflow of foreign capital.

In such a scenario, intervening to artificially prop up the value of the rupee only delays the inevitable. It inhibits adjustment by ensuring import demand does not fall, because the rupee has not depreciated enough to naturally shut off higher import demand, the cause of the widening deficit in the first place.

What is the difference between a weak rupee and a falling rupee?

Arguments for non-intervention, however, conflate a falling rupee with a weak rupee. A fall in the rupee value would not automatically increase export demand if the market expects a further fall. Exports might be higher when the rupee is weak, but may not rise when the rupee is falling if foreign buyers expect the price to fall even further and for goods to become cheaper at a later date.

At the same time, if the economy imports essential goods like oil, demand may not automatically reduce sufficiently

as the rupee falls. If people expect the rupee to fall further, and for the prices to rise even more tomorrow, they may front-load purchases today and increase import demand in the short run. This can be seen in the rush to buy petrol when prices were raised, as consumers expected further increases in the future.

A falling rupee would see higher import values, but no necessary increase in exports, ensuring that the deficit is not curtailed. The very problem that required a depreciation might just perpetuate itself. One might argue that exports would pick up and imports reduce when the process eventually works itself out. But the adjustment process is rarely painless. Rising import values of essential goods will lead to rising inflation in the domestic economy that has already experienced reverse migration and real wage squeezes.

What is the role of capital flows?

For the sake of argument, one can posit an equilibrium value of the rupee driven by fundamental values, such as export and import demands that exhibits uniform and predictable behaviour as the rupee changes value. The process may be

long, but the economy might eventually settle at this value, driven by fundamental changes in the current account. However, this assumption neglects the role of speculative foreign capital.

Much of the fall in the rupee has been driven by speculative outflows of foreign institutional investment that, for whatever reason, does not see Indian assets as being sufficiently remunerative. Perhaps investors think returns on Indian stocks will not be high in the future, that growth is not sustainable, or that interest rates will rise in developed country markets. Whatever the reason, these speculative expectations of foreign investors can lead to capital outflow and depreciation, necessitating current account adjustments based on the sentiments of foreign investors.

In such a situation, the 'actual' value of the rupee is determined not by consumption demand but by speculation. There are no fundamentals or technical values underpinning the pure speculation of financial markets. With indications that foreign Central Banks may soon raise interest rates, the rupee could come under further pressure.

Intervention is one amongst many policies that must be considered, and one that even developed economies have resorted to. As the yen slid against the dollar in April this year, Japanese Finance Minister Satsuki Katayama signalled that the government would take 'decisive action' in financial markets to maintain the yen.

Intervention to stem speculative capital flows is extremely hard to manage, and can lead to negative outcomes if the force of speculation is too great, or if governments do not - or cannot - show enough commitment in markets. However, we must not assume that the rupee can find an equilibrium value soon, for its fall is being driven by speculation rather than any fundamental economic behaviour. It is time to have a serious conversation regarding the role and place of foreign capital in India's growth story. (Rahul Menon is associate professor at O.P. Jindal Global University.)

THE GIST

▼ If the economy experiences a current account deficit without sufficient inflow of foreign capital, it faces a problem, with demand for foreign exchange exceeding available supply.

▼ Much of the rupee's decline has been driven by speculative outflows of foreign institutional investment. These speculative expectations can lead to capital outflow and depreciation, necessitating current account adjustments driven by market sentiment.

INSTA ACCOUNT MAY BE BLOCKED TOO

In 'cockroach party' handle, Govt sees a national security threat, asks X to block

Official claims IB flagged concerns, growing traction among young

Soumyarendra Barik & Saikat Kumar Bose
New Delhi, May 21

THE X handle of 'Cockroach Janta Party', a satirical account opened after Chief Justice of India Surya Kant's remarks about those who "attack the system", was withheld Thursday following a direction from the Centre in the wake of inputs from the Intelligence Bureau (IB) that raised "national security concerns," a senior government official told *The Indian Express*.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) asked X to withhold the account under Section 69(A) of the Information Technology Act, 2000, the official said, adding that the input to do so came from the IB.

"MeitY received an input from the IB to block the X ac-

POLITICS PAGE 5

COCKROACH JANTA PARTY SHOWS PEOPLE FRUSTRATED WITH GOVT: THAROOR

count of Cockroach Janta Party, citing that it posed a threat to the sovereignty of India. The IB believed that the account was posting inflammatory content through its account, which could have jeopardised the country's national security." the official said on condition of anonymity since such blocking orders are issued under a confidential framework. "In particular, the concern stemmed from the fact that the account's content was gaining traction among young people."

Section 69 (A) of the Information Technology Act empowers the Central government to restrict public access to information in the interest of sovereignty, security, public order or preventing incitement to offences.

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Memorial unveiled in Seoul to honour Indian troops

It pays tribute to the contributions of the 60 Para Field Ambulance of the Indian Army and the Custodian Force of India, which played a significant role during and after the Korean War

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and the Republic of Korea's Minister of Patriots and Veterans Affairs Kwon Oh-eul jointly inaugurated the Indian War Memorial at Imjingak Park in Seoul on Wednesday, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Korean War and honouring the contribution of Indian troops during the conflict.

According to the Defence Ministry, the memorial has been constructed to pay tribute to the courage, sacrifice, and humanitarian service of the 60 Para Field Ambulance of the Indian Army and the Custodian Force of India (CFI), which played a significant role during and after the Korean War.

The two Ministers laid wreaths at the memorial and paid homage to the Indian personnel, whose service continues to be remembered with gratitude by the people of South Korea.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Singh highlighted



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the inauguration of the Indian War Memorial in Seoul on Thursday. PTI

India's enduring contribution to peace and humanitarian assistance on the Korean Peninsula. He said the sacrifices and shared history between India and South Korea form a strong foundation for the growing Special Strategic Partnership between the two nations.

He also thanked the South Korean government, particularly the Ministry of

Patriots and Veterans Affairs, for supporting the establishment of the memorial. The South Korean Minister praised India's humanitarian role during the war and acknowledged the lasting bonds of friendship forged through the service of Indian troops.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the two countries to strengthen

cooperation in honouring Korean War veterans and promoting exchanges between them. A memoir dedicated to the sacrifices of the Indian soldiers was also released on the occasion.

The 60 Para Field Ambulance, led by Lt. Col. (Dr.) A.G. Rangaraj, earned widespread acclaim for treating thousands of wounded soldiers and civilians under difficult battlefield conditions. Their compassion and bravery earned them the title "Maroon Angels" from the Korean people.

India also played a key role after the armistice through the Custodian Force of India under the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission chaired by Lt. Gen. K.S. Thimayya, overseeing the humane repatriation of prisoners of war. The memorial stands at the site where the CFI had established "Hind Nagar" in 1954, which housed nearly 22,000 prisoners of war before their peaceful repatriation. The ceremony marked the conclusion of Mr. Singh's four-day visit to Vietnam and South Korea.

Ebola crisis: India-Africa Delhi summit postponed

Decision taken after consultations regarding the evolving health situation; new dates for summit will be finalised in due course, says MEA; the last such summit was held over a decade ago in 2015

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The Ebola public health emergency in Africa cast its shadow on India's diplomatic calendar on Thursday, with the Ministry of External Affairs and the African Union announcing the postponement of the India-Africa Forum Summit-IV that was scheduled to take place here from May 28 to 31.

In a joint statement, the MEA and the AU hinted at the Ebola crisis, saying that the decision was taken in view of the "evolving health situation in parts of Africa". The last such summit was held over a decade ago, and had also been postponed by a year due to an Ebola outbreak.

Consultations were held



Health concern: India has pledged to help governments of African nations to deal with the Ebola crisis. AP

between the Indian government and the Chairperson of the African Union and the African Union Commission regarding the "emerging public health situation on the continent", the MEA and the AU said in their statement. "Following these consulta-

tions, the two sides agreed that it would be advisable to convene the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit at a later date," they added. It said that new dates would be finalised later.

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Big cat meet in Capital too put on hold

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In the wake of concerns over the Ebola virus, India has postponed the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Summit that was scheduled in New Delhi on June 1.

The First IBCA Summit was scheduled in conjunction with the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit as several African countries host big cats. "New dates for the Summit will be announced in due course following consultations," a statement noted.

Ebola crisis: India-Africa summit postponed

There were several other Africa-related events to be hosted by the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations that have been cancelled, though some African delegates have arrived in New Delhi for these events.

New dates for the summit and its associated meetings “will be finalised through mutual consultations and communicated in due course,” the MEA said. The cancellation of the summit is being viewed as a setback to India-Africa ties, though officials insisted that the decision was taken in the best interest of all stakeholders. India expressed “solidarity with the peoples and Governments of Africa” and pledged to help them in dealing with the crisis with an “Africa-led” approach.

The fourth India-Africa Forum Summit was planned to be held between May 28 and 31, after a gap of nearly 11 years. Former Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Gurjit Singh, expressed confidence that the summit would be held once the latest health emergency stabilises in Africa. He pointed out that the third India-Africa Forum Summit was scheduled to be held in 2014 but had to be similarly postponed by a year, because of the outbreak of the Ebola virus in western Africa in 2014.

Health advisory

India has issued a health advisory for passengers arriving from or transiting through Ebola-affected countries, asking those with symptoms or exposure history to report to airport health authorities before immigration clearance. The Directorate General of Health Services’ advisory specifically mentions travellers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and South Sudan, all of which have been categorised as “high-risk countries” by the World Health Organisation. The advisory has been displayed at the Delhi airport by the Airport Health Organisation.

It asks travellers who had direct contact with blood or body fluids of a suspected or confirmed Ebola patient to immediately report to the airport health officer or the health desk.

(With PTI inputs)

India skips vote on UN climate resolution

Press Trust of India

UNITED NATIONS

India abstained from voting on a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution calling on countries to comply with their obligations on climate change, voicing concern that the draft “undermines” the “sacrosanct architecture” of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The resolution was adopted in the 193-member General Assembly on Wednesday with 141 votes in favour, eight against, and 28 abstentions. India said it had engaged constructively in negotiations, clarifying its concerns and positions.

“We are therefore disappointed that our concerns were not addressed, despite our best efforts to find common ground,” it said.

In the Explanation of Vote, First Secretary in India’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Petal Gahlot, said adoption of the resolution by the General Assembly does not create binding commitments for India.

The resolution welcomed the July 2025 unanimous advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on States’ obligations on climate change.

Bangladesh-China talks under way for Tarique Rahman's first foreign visit

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Bangladesh's new Prime Minister, Tarique Rahman, is in talks with Beijing to visit China in the coming weeks. According to a report in *Prothom Alo*, Beijing is keen to welcome Mr. Rahman for his first foreign trip in the last week of June.

Sources indicate that the schedule for the visit has not yet been finalised, but plans are under way to begin the several-day visit with high-level meetings between Prime Minister Rahman and top Chinese leaders, including Presi-

dent Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang.

The conversation about the visit was also disclosed last week by his Foreign Affairs Adviser, Humayun Kobir, who highlighted China's importance as a "development partner" and said that the visit will definitely take place.

Earlier, on May 8, during a conversation at a Dhaka hotel, China's ambassador to Bangladesh, Yao Wen, had indicated that the visit was being planned, though he did not mention a schedule at that time. The newspaper reported that Bangladesh may raise the need for in-



Tarique Rahman

frastructure development, the relocation of Chinese industries to Bangladesh, the establishment of Chinese economic zones in Bangladesh, and the Teesta Master Plan, in addition to the modernisation of Mongla port. Enhancing

aviation connectivity is also expected to be discussed.

Mr. Rahman, who will complete his first hundred days in office next week, has been holding talks within his team about his first visit abroad since coming to power in February. The first destinations were expected to be India, China, or Saudi Arabia. However, the crisis in the Gulf reduced the likelihood of a trip to Saudi Arabia, and Bangladesh's relations with India in recent weeks have been strained by rhetoric from West Bengal and Assam concerning illegal immigration.

Israel's govt. begins deporting hundreds of flotilla activists

Associated Press

TEL AVIV

Israel has released hundreds of activists who attempted to breach Israel's naval blockade of Gaza and is in the process of deporting them, according to a legal organisation working with the flotilla.

The Israel-based legal advocacy group, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, said that all of the international activists are in transit to a civilian airport near the southern Israeli city of Eilat for deportation.

Prime Minister Benja-



Benjamin Netanyahu

min Netanyahu said on Wednesday he instructed that the activists be deported "as soon as possible". He added that Israel has every right to stop "provocative flotillas of Hamas terrorist supporters".

Myanmar military recaptures 2 border towns from militias

Associated Press

BANGKOK

Myanmar's military-backed government says it has regained control of two towns near the country's borders with India and Thailand, marking a significant advance in the civil war as it seeks to reassert control of regions long held by resistance forces.

A report in the state-run *Myanmar Alinn* newspaper on Thursday said Tonzang, near the border with India, was captured by the Army on Wednesday after 10 days of operations to retake it. The paper pu-

blished photos of soldiers who recaptured the town in front of the township's administrative office and other departments.

That report came a day after *Myanmar Alinn* reported that the army on Tuesday retook control of Mawtaung, a strategically important border town for trade with Thailand, after a two-week operation.

The army's recapture of Tonzang in northwestern Chin state and Mawtaung in the southern Tanintharyi region come as the army has regained the upper hand in the nationwide conflict since mid-2025.