

# Strategic 13-km Zojila tunnel connecting Kashmir & Ladakh achieves breakthrough

Sabah Virani

Sonmarg, June 9

A FINAL 2.5-metre of rock inside the strategically significant Zojila Tunnel was blasted away on Tuesday, marking a major breakthrough in the construction of the 13.153-km tunnel on the National Highway-01 (NH-01) that will provide all-weather road connectivity between Sonamarg (J&K) and Meenamarg (Ladakh).

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari performed the breakthrough blasting of the main tunnel being constructed at an altitude of 11,578 feet above sea level, around 24 km from Sonamarg and 103 km from Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah were also present on the occasion. A breakthrough is the point or moment when a tunnel being excavated from both ends finally connects, marking the completion of a critical work. Officials of the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) said the breakthrough is six months ahead of schedule.

The Zojila Tunnel is set to become the world's longest bi-directional single-tube road tunnel at such a height. The tunnel forms the centerpiece of the 30.894-km Zojila project, which includes roads, bridges and tunnels aimed at ensuring year-



Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, J&K L-G Manoj Sinha and CM Omar Abdullah at Meenamarg on Tuesday. P11

round access to Ladakh. The 13-km tunnel, one of the most difficult road projects undertaken in India, is scheduled to be completed by February 2028. This is part of a 33-km project undertaken by NHIDCL, where apart from this tunnel, a road from Z-Morh tunnel to the Zojila tunnel is being built. The cost of both projects is around Rs 7000 crore.

After the tunnel breakthrough, Gadkari said the project will prove to be a lifeline for Ladakh. "This tunnel is situated at almost 3,000 metres above (from the sea level). Workers, engineers, contactors, NHIDCL team have worked at this place at -4 degree Celsius or below

temperature. 80% of the workers here were from this area. For about six months, there is no connectivity in the region. But with this tunnel, connectivity of Srinagar, Ganderbal, Sonamarg, Dras, Kargil, Ladakh will get a new boost," he said.

The project is expected to transform connectivity for residents, tourists and security forces travelling between Kashmir and Ladakh. Travel time will drop from over 2 hours to 15 minutes. Despite the breakthrough, significant work remains before the tunnel can be opened. Officials said overall physical progress stands at 68.55%, with around 4 km of

final lining yet to be completed, along with emergency tunnel infrastructure and associated road works.

The tunnel is expected to be ready for military use by December 2026. While the official target for opening it to civilian traffic is February 2028, Gadkari suggested efforts are underway to advance the timeline.

Calling the breakthrough a long-awaited milestone, Omar said improved connectivity would boost transport, tourism and economic opportunities across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, and expressed hope that the remaining work would be completed swiftly.

## '50-year demand' nears fulfilment — Ladakh closer to all-weather connectivity

Naveed Iqbal

Srinagar, June 9

LEADERS IN Ladakh expressed joy as engineers on Tuesday achieved a breakthrough in the Zojila tunnel, linking Ladakh with Kashmir through an all-weather route. The project has long been seen as critical to ending the region's seasonal isolation.

Ladakh MP Hanifa Jan described the breakthrough as the fulfilment of a dream that generations of Ladakhis had nurtured for decades. "People are extremely happy with this achievement," Jan said. "For at least the last 50 years, Ladakh's leadership has consistently demanded this tunnel to improve connectivity to the region."

Thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, who was present at the breakthrough ceremony, Jan said the tunnel holds immense strategic as well as civilian importance. "Though there were initial hurdles, the tunnel has finally become a reality. I think the government realised the need for this tunnel during the [Kargil] war in 1999."

Until now, the pass has re-

mained Ladakh's primary road link with the Kashmir Valley. Every winter, heavy snowfall and temperatures plunging to around -30°C cut off road connectivity for months. With Leh's airport serving as the region's only civilian air link, airfares often rise sharply during the winter, placing travel beyond the reach of many residents.

In Kargil, the first major town beyond the tunnel, religious and social organisation Jamiat Ul Ulama Isna Asharia Kargil hailed the breakthrough as a historic milestone. Its general secretary, Sheikh Ibrahim Khalili, and political affairs in-charge Sajjad Kargil said the Zojila tunnel had been among the most longstanding demands of the people of Kargil and Drass. They said local communities, activists, political leaders and civil society groups had campaigned for decades to secure year-round connectivity for the region.

Kargili noted that the residents have long pursued three major infrastructure aspirations: air services to the city and the construction of the tunnel, among others. He said that with the breakthrough of the tunnel, "one of these historic demands is now on the path to realisation".

# CID searches offices of Abhishek, TMC in 'signature forgery' case

Tanusree Bose  
Kolkata, June 9

THE WEST Bengal CID on Tuesday conducted searches at the Trinamool Congress's central party office in Kolkata's Kalighat and at the office of TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Camac Street as part of its investigation into an alleged signature forgery case.

The searches came on a day when Abhishek Banerjee skipped a third summons issued by the Crime Investigation Department (CID), citing pending proceedings before the Calcutta High Court and his absence from the city. Investigators are probing allegations that signatures of several TMC MLAs were forged on a letter sent to Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee regarding the appointment of the Leader of Opposition.

A CID team, accompanied by personnel from the Kalighat Police Station and central forces, reached the TMC office at 30B Harish Chatterjee Street in the afternoon. The premises is located adjacent to the residence of former chief minister and TMC chairperson Mamata Banerjee.

According to sources, CID officers were initially prevented from entering the premises and had to wait outside for nearly an hour. TMC treasurer and former MP Subhasish Chakraborty told the officers that both Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee were in New Delhi and that he could not permit entry without their authorisation. The officers, however, told Chakraborty that he did not have the authority to prevent them from entering.

The team eventually entered the premises shortly after 4 pm. The entire process was video-graphed, and officers were searched before entering the building, sources said.

The searches were concluded by 6.15 pm.

The CID also searched Abhishek Banerjee's office on Camac Street. According to sources, officers faced initial resistance there as well before being allowed to enter and carry out the search.

TMC leader and Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien slammed the CID action, saying a post on X: "Political vendetta shamelessly timed! Exactly at the same time as AITC (All India Trinamool Congress) chairperson Mamata Banerjee was having a meeting today in Delhi with Mrs Sonia Gandhi, CID was forcefully trying to enter the AITC party HQ adjoining residence in Kolkata. First loot vote, now loot files of a political rival. Democracy?"

The case stems from a complaint filed by rebel TMC MLAs Ritabrata Banerjee and Sandipan Saha, who alleged that a resolution nominating Sovandeb Chattopadhyay as Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, purportedly adopted on May 6, was fabricated and that signatures of several legislators on the document were forged.

Following a preliminary inquiry by the Assembly Secretariat, an FIR was registered at Hare Street Police Station, and the investigation was subsequently handed over to the CID.

The CID has so far recorded statements from 13 TMC MLAs. Three of them, Baharul Islam, Arup Roy, and Subhasish Das, have reportedly disowned the signatures attributed to them on the document.

It has constituted a special investigation team (SIT) headed by a DIG-rank officer to probe the allegations.

In the midst of the controversy, the Speaker last week appointed Ritabrata Banerjee as the Leader of Opposition. The TMC, however, moved the Calcutta High Court on Monday, challenging the Speaker's decision.

Meanwhile, sources said the CID had issued a summons to Abhishek Banerjee, asking him to appear before the agency on Tuesday. However, he wrote to the CID seeking more time, stating that the matter is pending before the Calcutta High Court and is scheduled to be heard on June 10. He also informed investigators that he was in New Delhi for political engagements.

He has challenged the CID summons before the Calcutta High Court.



A CID team during one of the searches in Kolkata on Tuesday. ANI

## Amid scrutiny and rebellion, Mamata meets Sonia in Delhi

Asad Rehman  
New Delhi, June 9

AS THE West Bengal CID Tuesday conducted searches at the Trinamool Congress's central party office in Kolkata's Kalighat and at the office of its national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Camac Street as part of its investigation into the alleged Assembly signature forgery case, party chief Mamata Banerjee met Congress Parliamentary chairperson Sonia Gandhi at the latter's residence in Delhi.

Sources in the TMC said Mamata's meeting was to discuss coordination among the INDIA bloc parties. The meeting at Sonia's 10, Janpath, residence in Delhi lasted an hour.

"The meeting was about the INDIA bloc working together in unity," said a senior party MP.

"Sonia ji and our leader (Mamata) have a strong personal relationship that goes back decades. If they meet, it is natural. If Didi is in Delhi, she will meet allies and Sonia ji is the senior-most among Opposition leaders so she met her," said another senior party MP, considered close to Mamata.

In a statement, TMC leader in the Rajya Sabha Derek O'Brien said: "Political vendetta shamelessly timed! Exactly at the same time as TMC chairperson Mamata Banerjee was having a meeting today in Delhi with Mrs Sonia Gandhi, CID was forcefully trying to enter the AITC party headquarters adjoining residence in Kolkata. First loot vote, now loot files of a political rival. Democracy? Main entrance overloaded with CRPF."

Earlier in the day, the TMC said that it was not worried by the exits of its leaders and that while the BJP may have power and government, it has "Maa, Maati and Maanush" (mother, soil, people) by its side.

The Mamata Banerjee-led party is facing a major crisis. A rebel group, led by senior Trinamool leader Kakoli Ghosh Dasgupta, wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday, saying they want to join the NDA. This group claims it has the support of 20 Lok Sabha MPs, a claim the party leadership has contested, saying the rebels were 12 in number. This comes days after 60 of the

party's 80 MLAs rebelled and challenged Mamata Banerjee's choice of Sovandeb Chattopadhyay as their leader in the Assembly.

At a press conference in Delhi on Tuesday, Trinamool MP Kalyan Banerjee, who was accompanied by party colleague Kirti Aazad, said, "We are not worried about who leaves. We need fresh blood, committed workers and leaders who stand by the party during difficult times. Our leader is Mamata Banerjee. Our symbol is the Trinamool Congress symbol. Our strength comes from our workers and the people of Bengal. You may have power, money, government machinery, agencies, vehicles, security and property. We have Maa, Maati and Maanush." Kalyan Banerjee said the rebel MPs who went to Bhupender Yadav's residence on Monday and held meetings with Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari have effectively become BJP. "Today, their leader is Narendra Modi. They may use different words, but the people of Bengal understand exactly what is happening," he said.

NO SIGN OF PRICE DIP, DOMESTIC PRODUCTION BEING RAMPED UP

# Fertiliser subsidy burden set to double on global supply crunch

PSUs float tenders for imports, Govt plans to tap Russia to meet demand

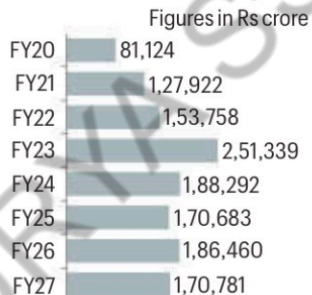
Siddharth Upasani  
& Aanchal Magazine  
New Delhi, June 9

RISING GLOBAL costs of fertilisers amid a supply crunch is likely to result in a subsidy burden of almost Rs 3.4 lakh crore, or an almost 100 per cent increase compared with the Budget estimate of Rs 1.7 lakh crore, according to top government sources.

"We are still selling fertiliser at a subsidised price of around

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## • Fertiliser subsidy



FY26 IS REVISED ESTIMATE, FY27 BUDGET ESTIMATE; SOURCE: BUDGET DOCUMENTS

Congestion at ports, exporters flag carriers' 'opportunistic pricing'

Ravi Dutta Mishra  
New Delhi, June 9

AMID LOGISTICAL disruption due to the West Asia crisis, Indian exporters are grappling with mounting financial burden posed by "opportunistic" pricing practices by foreign shipping lines and "non-transparent" imposition of detention, demurrage charges

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## E. EXPLAINED

### The Hormuz fallout

The near closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran and the US naval blockade has led to congestion at ports on India's western seaboard and sent freight costs soaring, severely impacting exporters and their margins.

# Fertiliser subsidy bill

Rs 300 per sack even though the cost has gone up from around Rs 2,900 post Covid to around Rs 4,500 now. So, the subsidy (bill) may be 100% more than the Budget estimate,” a source, who did not wish to be named, said.

“It’s a very complex situation. Global suppliers, including China, are holding on to their stock due to the Iran war. The government is looking at Russia to meet more of its imports,” another senior government official told *The Indian Express*.

Another concern that the government is keen to address relates to diversion of fertilisers meant for farmers to the industry. The official said this issue is being discussed at the highest levels of ministries concerned — agriculture, fertilisers and finance.

On May 27, state-owned National Fertilizers Ltd issued a global tender to buy 17 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of urea. Before that, in early April, Indian Potash Ltd had issued a tender to import 25 LMT of urea.

According to sources, the government does not see signs of fertiliser prices coming down and is trying to ramp up domestic production.

The government had esti-

mated it would need to spend Rs 1.71 lakh crore on fertiliser subsidy in 2026-27. Latest data from the Controller General of Accounts shows the Centre spent Rs 22,033 crore as subsidy in April for urea and nutrient based fertilisers, roughly 13% of the full-year estimate.

For 2025-26, the government raised the revised estimate for fertiliser subsidy to Rs 1.86 lakh crore from Rs 1.68 lakh crore. However, provisional data from the Controller General of Accounts shows the actual amount spent on fertiliser subsidy last fiscal was Rs 2.11 lakh crore – Rs 24,920 crore more than the revised estimate. This is 22% higher than 2024-25.

In addition to the stress on the government finances from the rising fertiliser subsidy, pressure is also coming from elevated fuel prices, with about Rs 1.23 lakh crore lost in the form of revenue foregone due to the Rs 10 per litre excise duty cut announced in March and under-recoveries of public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs), sources said. Prior to the excise duty cut, OMCs were losing about Rs 1,000 crore a day. That figure has now come down to around Rs 650 crore.

While the Centre managed to meet its fiscal deficit target of

4.4 per cent of GDP for 2025-26, the deficit in April surged to a 26-month high of Rs 3.62 lakh crore, accounting for 21.4 per cent of the entire 2026-27 target.

The war in West Asia and the closure of the key waterway of the Strait of Hormuz has led to a huge jump in fertiliser prices, with India’s latest purchases of urea from abroad having been at a cost-plus-freight price of \$935-\$959 per tonne, more than double the year-ago figure of \$410-\$420.

Fertiliser was one of the ‘3 Fs’ cited by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman last month – along with fuel and foreign exchange to buy gold – that required a focus amid pressures exerted on the rupee by the ongoing conflict as all these three items had to be paid for in foreign currencies and not rupees on account of them being imported.

Government officials also expressed concern about the diversion of subsidised fertiliser for farmers to industry.

“States have been told that fertiliser to farmers should be provided such that if the requirement, for example, is one sack, they should be given two sacks if needed. But in some states, five and even seven sacks are being given. How can that much fertiliser be even used? Clearly, it is going somewhere else,” an official said.

# No action against AIADMK MLAs who backed TVK in floor test, says T.N. Speaker

Move follows a formal request from Palaniswami days after rival AIADMK factions patched up; action initiated against four AIADMK MLAs who have resigned and joined ruling TVK: Prabhakar

**Press Trust of India**

CHENNAI

**D**ays after the rival AIADMK factions patched up, Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker J.C.D. Prabhakar announced on Tuesday that no action will be taken against the 21 MLAs from the Opposition party who voted in favour of the TVK government during the May 13 floor test.

The decision follows a formal request from AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami (EPS) to drop the matter.

Speaking to reporters at the State secretariat, the Speaker said after considering the request, it was decided that 21 AIADMK MLAs will not be disqualified.

Following the Speaker's decision these legislators will continue as Assembly members without facing action under anti-defection laws.

To a question about the fate of four AIADMK MLAs who have resigned and



S.P. Velumani, along with other rebel MLAs, submitting a letter to Tamil Nadu Speaker J.C.D. Prabhakar on May 27 declaring that all AIADMK legislators would function as a single unit in the Assembly. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

joined the ruling TVK, Mr. Prabhakar said action has been initiated against the legislators. "Once a decision has been made, I will inform you officially," he added.

During the crucial trust vote for the newly formed TVK government, 25 of the AIADMK's 47 MLAs defied party the diktat to vote against the C. Joseph Vijay-led ruling dispensation.

The defiance created a severe crisis within the AIADMK and a rebel

group, led by former Ministers S.P. Velumani and C Ve Shanmugam, was formed, which prompted EPS to approach the speaker for disqualification of MLA posts.

Of the 25 legislators, who supported TVK during the confidence motion, four MLAs - S Sathyabama, Esakki Subaya, S Jayakumar and Maragatham Kumaravel have resigned and switched to TVK.

Subsequently, the Speaker accepted the resignations of the four MLAs

and notified the Election Commission (EC).

## **Bypolls for vacant seats**

Their respective constituencies are now declared vacant by the EC and will head to byelections.

The two AIADMK factions had recently patched up. The AIADMK leadership later reversed its stance, formally communicating to the Speaker that it wished to drop all proceedings against the rebel faction.

# 14 Kukis held hostage by Naga groups released

Naga group president says 'detainees' were released after Amit Shah's commitment that govt. will put in all efforts to establish status of 6 missing Nagas; Nagaland, Meghalaya CMs welcome move

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

Nearly a month after being held hostage by Naga armed groups in Senapati district of Manipur, 14 Kukis were released on Tuesday following an intervention by church bodies and other civil society groups, officials said.

Manipur Director-General of Police Mukesh Singh told *The Hindu* that 14 Kukis had been released and reached their homes.

Following the killing of three church leaders belonging to the Thadou tribe who were ambushed by armed groups on May 13, at least 44 civilians were held hostage by Kuki and Naga groups in Kangpokpi and Senapati districts of Manipur. No arrests have been made for the murder of the three church leaders yet.

While others were released, 14 Kukis remained in captivity till Tuesday and six Naga men are still missing.

The United Naga Council (UNC), the apex body of the Nagas in Manipur, had



The Manipur Police secured the route to ensure the safe passage of 14 Kuki men to Taphou Kuki Village. @MANIPUR\_POLICE/X

earlier announced that the 14 men will be released on June 1 but it later said that considering the "prevailing sentiments of the Naga public", the release is cancelled.

On Tuesday, UNC President Ng. Lorho said that the "detainees" were released considering the commitment made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah through Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio assuring that the government will put in all efforts to establish the status of the six missing Nagas. He thanked various church and tribal bodies and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma.

"Today, the UNC in consultation with all stakeholders facilitated the release of all 14 Kuki detainees and handed them over to the local administration," Mr. Lorho said. The Chief Ministers of Nagaland and Meghalaya had earlier appealed for the release of the abducted individuals.

## CM welcomes move

On Tuesday, Mr. Rio said that he welcomes the safe and humane release of the Kuki hostages by the UNC and Naga civil society organisations, in response to the appeal made by church bodies led by the Baptist World Alliance.

"Over the past weeks, I

had several interactions and deliberations with representatives of Naga civil society groups in our collective efforts to resolve the impasse on humanitarian grounds and in the true spirit of Christian values," Mr. Rio said on X.

"We once again appeal for the safe release of the 6 Naga hostages in a reciprocal & humanitarian manner so that they return to their loved ones. We hope this gesture will help pave the way for trust, understanding & dialogue as we strive for genuine peace, reconciliation & harmony," he further said.

Mr. Sangma said in a statement, "At a time when emotions run high and communities continue to bear the scars of conflict, the decision to place humanity above differences sends a powerful message of hope to the people of Manipur and the wider Northeast."

He said he was renewing his appeal to all Kuki civil society organisations to reciprocate this gesture by ensuring the immediate and unconditional release of the six Naga civilians.

# India's road through Myanmar is one of engagement

When Myanmar's President U Min Aung Hlaing landed in Bodh Gaya, Bihar, on May 30, 2026, the symbolism was hard to miss. Before travelling to New Delhi for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu, he visited the Mahabodhi Temple, one of Buddhism's holiest sites and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The stopover underscored a broader message: India was welcoming Myanmar's leader not only through the language of diplomacy but through shared civilisational ties.

This is a major diplomatic engagement, the first visit to India (May 30- June 3, 2026) by Min Aung Hlaing in his capacity as President, reflecting the growing importance of India-Myanmar relations in a shifting geopolitical environment of South and Southeast Asia. For New Delhi, the timing and tone are equally significant.

## Why now

The world's democracies have largely turned away from Naypyidaw since the February 2021 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government. Western nations imposed sanctions and sought to isolate the military regime. But Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told reporters that India's policy is "not intended to be a commentary on the internal political arrangements" in Myanmar, and that New Delhi believes engagement is the best way forward.

This is realpolitik disguised as pragmatism. Myanmar is India's gateway to Southeast Asia and a cornerstone of its Act East and Neighbourhood First policies. Sharing a 1,643-km border with four northeastern States, Myanmar's instability poses a direct threat to India's security interests in the region.

Then there is the China factor. Beijing has aggressively cultivated Naypyidaw since the coup, filling the vacuum left by western withdrawal with infrastructure financing, arms supplies, and



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Connectivity,  
security, and  
China shape  
India's outreach  
to Myanmar

diplomatic cover. For India to cede Myanmar's strategic space entirely to China would be a self-inflicted wound in its own backyard.

## The infrastructure stakes

Few indicators better reflect the depth of India's strategic investment in Myanmar than the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway – two connectivity corridors that dominated the Modi-Hlaing agenda.

The Kaladan project connects Kolkata to Sittwe by sea, then follows the Kaladan River inland to Paletwa, before linking by road to Zorinpui in Mizoram. The sea and river components are operational, with the first cargo shipment reaching Sittwe in May 2023. But the critical 109-km Paletwa-Zorinpui Road running through mountainous, flood-prone terrain in Chin State remains incomplete. India's Shipping Minister told Parliament in 2025 that full operationalisation is targeted for 2027.

The Trilateral Highway carries an even grander ambition: linking Moreh in Manipur to Mae Sot in Thailand through Myanmar over roughly 1,360 km, with planned extensions to Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam. Once completed, it could transform India's landlocked northeast into a gateway to Southeast Asia. It was supposed to be finished by 2019. It still is not.

Myanmar's internal conflict lies behind both delays. Armed groups control large stretches of territory along the two corridors, making construction difficult and unpredictable. President Hlaing assured Mr. Modi that Myanmar would do "everything" to complete the projects, while Mr. Misri reiterated that they remain a "major priority" despite security challenges. At the Myanmar-India Trade and Investment Conclave, Mr. Aung Hlaing described them as vital to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-India economic corridor. The real question is whether these assurances will

translate into progress on the ground. Beyond infrastructure, the summit covered significant ground. Bilateral trade stood at \$1.95 billion in 2025-26, and both sides agreed to increase it through a rupee-kyat settlement mechanism, with additional discussions on critical minerals and rare-earth cooperation.

On security, Mr. Aung Hlaing reiterated Myanmar's assurance that its territory would not be used against India's interests – a significant pledge given the long presence of Indian insurgent groups and cybercrime networks in Myanmar's border regions. More than 2,400 Indian nationals have been rescued from scam centres through bilateral cooperation over the past 18 months, though many remain trapped. On education, India announced an increase in Mekong-Ganga ICCR scholarships for Myanmar students from 36 to 100 annually from 2026.

## The larger reckoning

By receiving Mr. Aung Hlaing as Myanmar's President, India has signalled a degree of acceptance of the country's evolving political reality. This does not necessarily amount to endorsement of the military-backed government. Still, it suggests a recognition that meaningful engagement with Myanmar requires working with those currently in power. For Myanmar, the visit is equally consequential. Mr. Aung Hlaing last visited India in 2019 as Myanmar's military chief. His return to New Delhi as head of state – and his choice of India for his first major bilateral visit abroad – signals a deliberate engagement with a neighbour that can provide a diplomatic and economic counterweight to overwhelming Chinese dependence. For India, the calculus is rooted in geography, security and the recognition that disengagement rarely produces better outcomes. The message is clear: pragmatic engagement, however uncomfortable, may increasingly shape regional approaches to Myanmar in the years ahead.

# India calls for dialogue on climate finance, adaptation at Bonn meet

**Jacob Koshy**

NEW DELHI

India has called for the shrinking pool of climate finance and a widening adaptation finance gap to be tackled head-on at the United Nations climate negotiations-linked talks under way in Bonn, Germany. It has urged that a Paris Agreement provision which obliges developed countries to provide funds to developing nations, be given dedicated agenda space to enable substantive progress.

The intervention came in India's statement to the 64<sup>th</sup> session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB64), delivered by Harkeerat Randhawa of the External Affairs Ministry.

India associated itself with the positions taken on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC), and the BASIC



India associated itself with the positions taken on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the LMDC and the BASIC bloc. REUTERS

bloc (Brazil, South Africa, India, China).

The Bonn meeting runs from June 8 to 18 and is the mid-year session of the two subsidiary bodies – on implementation (SBI) and on scientific and technological advice (SBSTA) – that prepare draft decisions for the annual Conference of the Parties. It is the first multilateral climate conference since COP30, held in Belém, Brazil, last Novem-

ber, and is tasked with turning those outcomes into negotiable text ahead of COP31. That summit will be hosted in Antalya, Turkey in November, which holds the formal presidency and Australia presiding over the negotiations.

## Unilateral trade

India pressed for the dialogue on unilateral trade measures – a reference to carbon border levies such

as the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) – to address their adverse effects on developing countries' climate action, anchored in Article 3.5 of the Convention.

It cautioned that the Mitigation Work Programme's facilitative, non-prescriptive character be preserved, that the adaptation goal remain balanced and Party-driven, and that no obligations beyond agreed mandates be introduced.

This year's agenda is dominated by a shift to an implementation phase. Key items include the Global Goal on Adaptation, the Just Transition Work Programme and the Global Stocktake, alongside climate finance and the contested future of the Sharm el-Sheikh Mitigation Work Programme, which is due to conclude in 2026 with a possible extension on the table.



People gather in large numbers during an anti-Pakistan protest, in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, on Tuesday. ANI

# Markets, streets deserted in PoK; protests at Pak consulate in UK

Press Trust of India

Islamabad, London, June 9

SHOPS AND markets remained closed on Tuesday in different parts of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after a protest call by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), as over 20 people have reportedly been killed in recent police action in the region.

About 2,000 protestors associated with the JAAC launched a protest march from Bhimber and they would reach Mirpur for onward travel to Muzaffarabad, BBC Urdu reported.

It added that some protesters would reach Rawalakot and then proceed to Muzaffarabad. Police and security forces personnel are patrolling the roads and other areas.

JAAC has been staging protests demanding subsidised flour and electricity. The group was outlawed on Friday by

authorities, citing concerns over public order and security.

The streets in Muzaffarabad were deserted, with hardly any vehicles on the roads, *Dawn* reported. It added that riot police and paramilitary personnel remained deployed in the city.

It reported that hundreds of people had gathered in the Quaid-i-Azam stadium of Mirpur, another major town of PoK. "Shops are closed here, and traffic is off the roads," local journalist Sajjad Jarral told *Dawn* by telephone.

The legal fraternity of PoK boycotted judicial proceedings on the Bar Council's call to protest the alleged arrest of senior lawyer Amjad Ali Khan, a core member of the JAAC.

Pakistan's human rights body on Monday said that it was "deeply alarmed" by the ongoing violence in PoK during violent clashes.

Authorities on Tuesday an-

nounced a reward for those who helped in the arrest of the key leaders of the JAAC.

According to an official notification, a "Rs 10 million reward money" will be given to any person who provides information leading to the successful arrest of the central leaders of the JAAC, including Shaukat Nawaz Mir, Omar Nazir Kashmiri, Sardar Aman and Khawaja Mehran.

Meanwhile, PoK's so-called Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore urged a return to the negotiating table to end the tensions that have gripped the region over the past few days.

Protesters on Tuesday staged a demonstration in front of the Pakistani Consulate in Bradford, the UK, over the firing on mourners at a funeral in PoK. This came days after 30 British MPs sought diplomatic intervention over the massive human rights abuses in PoK.

# India condemns Pakistan's air strikes against Afghanistan

**Press Trust of India**

UNITED NATIONS

In a scathing attack on Pakistan at the UN, India has condemned its “trade and transit terrorism” and deadly air strikes against Afghanistan, saying that dressing up a massacre as a military operation does not absolve the perpetrator.

“Pakistan’s campaign of military air strikes against Afghanistan is causing huge civilian casualties and suffering to the Afghan people. Such unconscionable acts of violence are a blatant assault on Afghanistan’s sovereignty and a threat to the region’s peace and stability,” India’s Permanent Representative to the UN Harish Parvathaneni said at a meeting on the ‘Situation in Afghanistan’ in the UN Security Council on Monday.

## **Violation of law**

Strongly condemning the Pakistani air strikes on Afghan territory, India said these were flagrant violations of international law, UN Charter and the principle of state sovereignty.

Mr. Parvathaneni cited UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan information



Harish Parvathaneni

that 372 civilians had been killed and 397 injured just in the first three months of this year; a large majority of them during the holy month of Ramzan, which was a time of peace, mercy and reflection, making the act all the more shameful.

“No faith, no law and no morality can justify such actions,” he said at the UN horseshoe table.

With Pakistan listening, India strongly reiterated that “Killing, maiming and orphaning civilians is not counter-terrorism.”

“Espousing high principles of international law and Islamic solidarity while mercilessly carrying out air strikes during the holy month of Ramzan is the perfect example of hypocrisy,” Mr. Parvathaneni said.

# Indian entities on latest EU sanctions package on Russia

**Sriram Lakshman**

LONDON

The European Commission has proposed its 21st package of sanctions on Russia which also includes Indian entities. The sanctions need to be approved by member states before they are finalised.

The proposed package focuses on energy, crypto and financial services and trade, including fisheries, European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen said.

The sanctions would also ban the entry of former Russian combatants into the EU.

“Brick by brick, we are collapsing the foundations of Russia’s war economy,” the EU’s top diplomat Kaja



Ursula von der Leyen

Kallas said on X.

“The new listings will cover more than 30 designations in the drones manufacturing as well as new export control measures on 50 companies, including entities based in China, Turkiye, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, UAE, and India,” Ms. Kallas wrote.

This is not the first time Indian entities have found

themselves on a EU sanctions list. However, the news comes as Brussels and New Delhi are in the implementation phase of a trade agreement that was announced in February.

The sanctions add 30 vessels to the existing 632 sanctioned ships in the so called “shadow fleet” of Russia – vessels transporting Russian oil and petroleum products and circumventing Western sanctions.

The package also expands sanctions to cover 31 more Russian banks, 20 banks, crypto-related entities and oil traders in third countries. It also introduces an export ban on equipment used to support drones and metals and alloys used in defence and aerospace.

# Washington considering three pressure scenarios against Cuba, says Diaz-Canel

Agence France-Presse

HAVANA

Cuba's President said in an interview published on Monday that the United States was considering three possible scenarios for its pressure campaign against the communist-led island: fomenting social unrest, assuming control of the economy or launching a military campaign.

The remarks by Miguel Diaz-Canel to Spanish digital news outlet *elDiario.es* come as his country faces an escalating economic crisis under U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign, which include a fuel blockade and ramping up of sanctions.

"They are betting on



People queue outside a bank in Havana as U.S. sanctions prompt a foreign bank to sever ties with a financial institution in Cuba. AFP

three scenarios," Mr. Diaz-Canel said.

"One scenario is through economic strangulation to provoke social unrest, and for that social unrest to then give them the chance, under the pretext of humanitarian aid, to in-

tervene," he said.

The second is to "continue a coercive dialogue with Cuba, using maximum pressure, in order to seize the Cuban economy, to occupy the country economically and for that to then give them the possi-

bility of provoking a change in the political system, which is the ultimate goal of the United States," he said.

The United States has pressured several foreign businesses in recent weeks to halt their activities in Cuba by threatening sanctions against anyone doing deals with state-run enterprises.

"A third scenario is that of military aggression," Mr. Diaz-Canel added, emphasizing that all three possibilities had been mentioned by Mr. Trump. In the face of possible military action, Mr. Diaz-Canel defended Cuba's right to prepare to defend itself, in such a way "that there is no surprise" nor "defeat".

# Militants, police executed, maimed dozens of Palestinians: UN report

The report records 249 cases of extrajudicial punishment between August 2024 and January 2026, resulting in 108 deaths; reported abuses include executions, kneecapping, breaking bones with metal pipes or cement bricks, and severe beatings

## Associated Press

RAMALLAH

**H**amas militants and police units in Gaza beat, maimed and publicly executed dozens of Palestinians during its war with Israel in acts amounting to war crimes, according to a United Nations report released on Tuesday.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' report documented hundreds of cases of extrajudicial punishment in the war-ravaged territory, which it said were often publicised during and afterward to instil fear in the populace.

"These cases involved executions, kneecapping, bone-breaking with metal pipes or cement bricks and beatings and were framed by the perpetrators as punishments for alleged collaboration with Israel, looting humanitarian aid, theft, drug-related offences or affiliations with internal rivals," it said.

The commission found that Hamas-affiliated militants and police forces were involved in nearly one-fourth of the 249 documented cases – including 108 deaths – from August 2024 to January 2026. The commission specifically investigated cases involving Hamas-affiliated forces but



**Supreme power:** Hamas has run Gaza for nearly two decades since seizing control of the territory from the Palestinian Authority. AP

also counted ones attributed to other armed groups.

Representatives for Hamas did not respond to questions about the report's allegations.

er ceasefire halted more than two years of full-scale war with Israel, Hamas has steadily reconsolidated its control over the areas of Gaza that it still governs.

According to the report, rather than being imposed through courts or judges, the punishments were carried out by Hamas's military wing and police units.

Srinivasan Muralidhar, the UN commission's chair, said the abuses documented in Gaza were occurring in an "environment engineered by Israel," where "Hamas-affiliated forces have exploited the vacuum created by relentless Israeli attacks and widespread destruction".

Hamas has run Gaza for nearly two decades since seizing control of the territory from the internationally recognised Palestinian Authority. Since an Octob-