

# Netra, India's airborne surveillance platform, gets final operational nod

**Hemanth C.S.**

BENGALURU

The indigenous Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) system, which played a pivotal role as a force multiplier for the Indian Air Force in the 2019 Balakot strikes and Operation Sindoor last year, was accorded final operational clearance (FOC) on Thursday.

Developed indigenously by the Bengaluru-based Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS), the Netra AEW&C is integrated on the Brazilian Embraer EMB-145I aircraft platform.

The system encompasses a sophisticated suite of mission equipment, including an Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, Identification Friend or Foe (IFF), mission computer, secure communication networks, electronic support measures (ESM) and communi-



Air Marshal Awadhesh Kumar Bharti and others, pose during a ceremony marking the FOC of NETRA on Thursday. MURALI KUMAR K

cation support measures. India is the fifth country in the world to develop this capability, as Netra can detect, track, identify and monitor airborne and maritime targets enhancing the network-centric operations capabilities of the IAF.

## Dedication

At an event to mark the occasion, scientists and IAF officers dedicated the

achievement to colleagues killed in a tragic air crash in 1999. The seeds of India's airborne warning and control system (AWACS) were sown in the early 1980s.

However, the tragic crash of a modified HS-748 Avro aircraft near Arakkonam in Tamil Nadu, with eight people aboard, including four IAF personnel and four scientists, on January 11, 1999 resulted in the programme being

abandoned temporarily.

The programme took off again after being sanctioned afresh in 2004. During this intervening period, scientists kept their perseverance and hoped for the best.

"On January 11, 1999, the ill-fated aircraft had a crash. I salute personnel who were on board, who made their supreme sacrifice. Today we have shown that their sacrifice has not gone in vain. This FOC is dedicated to them," Director-General of Aeronautics Cluster of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), K. Rajalakshmi Menon said.

The Initial Operational Clearance (IOC) for the Netra was accorded in 2015 and it was inducted into the IAF in 2017.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has approved the development of six more AEW&C Mk-1A systems by the CABS.

## *Spreading the wings*



**Mission ready:** The indigenously developed NETRA Airborne Early Warning and Control system during an event to receive final operational clearance at the Centre for Airborne Systems in Bengaluru, Karnataka, on Thursday. K. MURALI KUMAR (REPORT: PAGE 14)

# Oppn. seeks rollback of new FCRA rules, flags adverse impact on civil society

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal and Communist Party of India (Marxist) Rajya Sabha leader John Brittas have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit

Shah, respectively, seeking the withdrawal of the recently notified Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2026, arguing that the changes will adversely affect the functioning of civil society organisations.

The new rules, notified on June 22, require non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to register under one of five categories - social, economic, education-



K.C. Venugopal



John Brittas

al, cultural, and religious - with separate activity lists prescribed for each. Organisations must also disclose details of their activities, geographical scope, websites, social media accounts and publications, and pay separate fees for each category and State or Union Territory in which they operate.

In his letter to Mr. Modi, Mr. Venugopal said the amendments amount to an attempt to curb the inde-

pendence of NGOs. “These rules are an overt and systemic assault on India’s civil society, designed not to regulate, but to strangle the NGOs that form the backbone of our grassroots developmental and social welfare frameworks,” he wrote.

Mr. Venugopal argued that forcing NGOs to choose from a “rigid, government-mandated list” of activities and restricting their operational geogra-

phy would undermine their ability to respond to emergencies.

In a separate letter to the Union Home Minister, Mr. Brittas raised constitutional concerns, arguing that the amendments go beyond financial regulation and alter the nature of oversight over voluntary organisations. “Collectively, these changes signify a decisive shift from regulating foreign contribution to regulating voluntary organisations themselves,” he wrote.

He also said the rules introduce vague terms such as “proselytisation”, which could lead to arbitrary interpretation and have a “chilling effect on the legitimate exercise of constitutional freedoms”.

# Puri, Iran Minister hold talks after years of curtailed trade

**Saptaparno Ghosh**

NEW DELHI

Indicative of a potential revival in energy cooperation, Union Minister for Petroleum Hardeep Singh Puri met his Iranian counterpart Mohsen Paknejad on the sidelines of the BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting Thursday.

Describing the meeting, Mr. Puri wrote on his social media, 'We explored opportunities to cooperate in the energy sector for a beneficial engagement.'

India halted crude purchases from Tehran in 2019 following U.S. sanctions. As per S&P Global Commodities at Sea data, India purchased 5.18 lakh barrels/day of Iranian oil in



**A thaw:** Puri with Paknejad on the sidelines of BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting, in Gurugram, Haryana. @HARDEEPSURI

2018 slowing down to 2.68 lakh barrels/day between January and May 2019 on U.S.'s temporary waiver.

Indian refiners moved away from purchasing the crude until April this year when U.S. offered a temporary 30-day waiver. Kpler data show India im-

ported 1.33 lakh barrels/day of Iranian oil in April

However, the latest peace-deal between Iran and U.S. houses a waiver for "production, delivery and sale of crude oil, petrochemical products and petroleum products" from Iran.

# Envoy takes charge in Dhaka, says travel visas to resume

**Press Trust of India**

DHAKA/NEW DELHI

India's new High Commissioner to Dhaka, Dinesh Trivedi, on Thursday announced the resumption of travel visas for Bangladesh nationals as he assumed office.

Earlier, the 76-year-old Bharatiya Janata Party leader presented his credentials to President Mohammed Shahabuddin, marking the start of his diplomatic assignment.

He was named as the envoy to Bangladesh on April 27, becoming the first politician to serve in this position.

The government has granted Mr. Trivedi the status equivalent to a Union Cabinet Minister, according to a government order.

An order issued on Wednesday (June 24) by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said Mr. Trivedi "has been assigned the equivalent status of Union Cabinet Minister in the Table of Precedence (ToP) as a measure personal to him,



Dinesh Trivedi

without amending the Table of Precedence”.

## **Halted two years ago**

The travel visas were halted nearly two years ago amid an escalated security situation and deteriorating ties with New Delhi during the Muhammad Yunus-led interim regime.

“I am very happy to be able to announce the launch of general travel visas again. Visa applications can be submitted starting June 28.” he said. Mr. Trivedi said visas would be issued from all five centres –

Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chattogram, Sylhet, and Khulna – and the process would be expanded further in the future.

The envoy said urgent medical visas would continue to be provided for humanitarian reasons. Travel visas for Bangladeshi nationals typically permit access to India for tourism, medical treatments, government and business assignments and transiting to third countries.

Mr. Trivedi succeeded career diplomat Pranay Kumar Verma.

Mr. Verma's four-year tenure, which ended last month, witnessed the ouster of Sheikh Hasina's government in a student-led uprising in August 2024 and a subsequent downturn in India-Bangladesh relations under the interim administration.

Elections were held in the country earlier this year. On February 17, Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader Tarique Rahman took the oath as Prime Minister.

**AFTER A NEARLY TWO-YEAR SUSPENSION**

# From Sunday, India will resume tourist visas for Bangladesh nationals: Trivedi

Envoy presents credentials in Dhaka, Delhi grants him Cabinet Minister status

**Divya A**

*New Delhi, June 25*

MOVING TO improve bilateral relations, India Thursday announced the resumption of tourist visas for Bangladeshi nationals after a nearly two-year suspension.

The announcement was made by the newly appointed Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Dinesh Trivedi, during a visit to the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) in Dhaka.

Delhi suspended tourist visas for Bangladeshi nationals in August 2024 following political unrest and the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

Trivedi announced that tourist visa applications will resume on June 28, at five visa centres, including the one in Dhaka.

This was his first announcement after presenting his credentials to the President of Bangladesh, Mohammed Shahabuddin, Thursday after-



Indian envoy to Bangladesh Dinesh Trivedi with President Mohammed Shahabuddin in Dhaka. @IHCDHAKA

## THE EDITORIAL PAGE

**MY ABSENCE IS NOT SILENCE. I WILL RETURN THROUGH THE STRENGTH OF THE PEOPLE**

**SHEIKH HASINA WAZED,**  
FORMER BANGLADESH PM  
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noon, signalling that he has been tasked with repairing ties between the two countries.

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# Bangladesh

“I am very happy to be able to announce the launch of general travel visas again. Visa applications can be submitted starting June 28,” Trivedi said, adding visas would be issued from all five centres – Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chattogram, Sylhet and Khulna — and the process would be expanded further in the future. Urgent medical visas, he said, would continue to be provided for humanitarian reasons.

Last month, *The Indian Express* reported that India and Bangladesh were planning to resume visa services soon. As both countries sought to normalise their relationship after a period of significant turmoil, the full-scale resumption of visa services was agreed upon by both sides as an important first step.

Bangladesh resumed issuing visas to Indian citizens across all categories following the swearing-in of the Tarique Rahman government in February this year. During Bangladesh For-

eign Minister Khalilur Rahman's visit to India in April, the normalisation of visa processes was one of the key topics discussed by Dhaka. All Bangladesh visa centres in India, including the High Commission in New Delhi and the consular divisions in Kolkata, Agartala, Mumbai and Chennai, have been operational since February 20. In response, Dhaka requested Delhi promptly reciprocate on visa issue.

The five IVACs in Bangladesh came under attack in August 2024, and Indian personnel working at development projects were threatened. Due to security threats and the attacks on the High Commission premises, the High Commission of India was forced to scale down visa operations in Bangladesh.

While visa services for Bangladesh citizens were severely hit in view of security concerns, they were never completely shut down.

On Thursday, the new Indian High Commissioner was welcomed to Bangabhaban, the official residence of the President, with a ceremonial guard of hon-

our. He then met the President and presented his credentials.

A Bangabhaban presidential palace spokesman said a contingent of the President Guard Regiment offered Trivedi a guard of honour before he presented his diplomatic papers.

Meanwhile, the Centre has granted Trivedi a status equivalent to that of a Union Cabinet Minister. An order issued by the MHA said Trivedi “has been assigned the equivalent status of Union Cabinet Minister in the Table of Precedence (ToP) as a measure personal to him, without amending the Table of Precedence.”

“The position in the Table of Precedence is for ceremonial functions only,” it said.

According to figures provided by Bangladesh High Commission to *The Indian Express*, over 13,000 visas have been issued to Indian citizens in the first two months since resumption of operations around February 20. Bangladesh has been India's top source of foreign tourist arrivals, often accounting for over 20% of total arrivals.

# In blockaded part of Manipur, an LPG cylinder now sells for ₹5,000

40 people killed in the State since President's Rule was revoked in February; Deputy CM blocked from travel to Imphal; rice and petrol prices more than double in Kangpokpi district; efforts are on to ensure movement of convoys carrying essentials

**Vijaita Singh**  
NEW DELHI

**P**rices of essentials such as rice, petrol, and cooking gas have spiralled in Kangpokpi district of Manipur over the last month, due to a severe economic blockade being imposed since May 13, when three Thadou pastors were killed in the Kuki-dominated district.

The blockade is so severe that Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen, who represents Kangpokpi in the Manipur Assembly, is yet to travel to the State capital, Imphal, since the elected government was restored after President's Rule was revoked. Four months after she took oath, she still virtually attends the meetings called by Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh in Imphal.

At least 40 people have been killed in Manipur since February 4, when President's Rule was revoked, in a fresh wave of ethnic conflict that has now spread to the Naga and Kuki communities. The north-



**In limbo:** Truckers have frequently demanded better security for convoys carrying essential supplies in Manipur. FILE PHOTO

eastern State is inhabited by three major communities: the Meitei who dominate the Imphal valley and the tribal Kuki-Zo and Naga people who largely live in the surrounding hills. So far, around 300 people have been killed since ethnic violence, initially between Meiteis and Kukis, erupted in the State on May 3, 2023.

Due to Kangpokpi's location — surrounded by the Naga-dominated Senapati district in the north and the Meitei-dominated valley districts in the south —

transportation of essential items has been severely affected, with Naga village volunteers imposing a blockade on goods entering from outside the State.

Despite initiatives taken by the State government, daily items are scarcely available, according to Haokholet Kipgen, the MLA from Saitu constituency in Kangpokpi. There is no supply of LPG cylinders and those already in the district are being sold for ₹5,000 in the black market. A 50-kg bag of rice, which cost ₹1,400 to ₹1,700 before

the blockade is now being sold at ₹4,000, the MLA told *The Hindu*.

Thangminlen Kipgen, president of Sadar Hills (Kangpokpi), a civil society group, said there has been a noticeable difference in administration since the elected government was restored, but the district's access to National Highway-2, which connects it to Dimapur in Nagaland has been blocked since May 13.

About 70% of daily supplies are brought to Kangpokpi through the arterial road, he said.

## Local inflation

"It is always the poor who are affected by such incidents. Because of shortage of cooking gas, people switched to induction tops, which is leading to frequent power cuts of seven to eight hours. The cost of transportation has gone up. A litre of petrol costs ₹250 to ₹280. There is no way to control this local inflation. It has an effect on all commodities," Mr. Kipgen said.

A senior security force

official confirmed that several groups have been placing illegal blockades along NH-2, and added that efforts are on to ensure the movement of convoys carrying essential supplies. Over the past week, around 30 bunkers set up by village volunteers have been dismantled, the official said.

After the bodies of six missing Naga men, including two pastors, were recovered on June 10 from Kangpokpi, the blockades have intensified. The six men and their family members were abducted on May 13 following the killing of three Thadou church leaders in an ambush the same day in Kangpokpi.

At least 44 civilians were reportedly taken hostage by Kuki and Naga groups in Kangpokpi and Senapati districts. While several of those abducted were released earlier, 14 members of the Kuki community who remained in captivity were released on June 9, a day before the bodies of the Naga hostages were recovered.

## Kuki-Zo body admits six Nagas were killed by Kukis

**The Hindu Bureau**  
GUWAHATI

The Kuki-Zo Council (KZC), the apex body of the Kuki-Zo tribes in Manipur, on Thursday admitted that members of their community executed six Liangmai Naga villagers who were abducted after three Thadou church leaders were killed in an ambush more than a month ago.

Owning up to the "great mistake" in a video while addressing media persons, KZC chairman Henlianthang Thanglet said the six Naga men were killed during an outburst of emotion. "I really criticise it," he said in the company of KZC spokesperson Ginza Vualzong.

This was the first known public expression of regret by any Kuki individual or civil society organisation over the killing of the six Naga civilians. Their whereabouts were not known until security forces recovered their decomposed and dismembered bodies on June 11.

On June 8, the National Investigation Agency took over the probe into the killing of the three Thadou church leaders.

# 188 dead, 1,500 injured as earthquakes hit Venezuela

'Doublet earthquake', with an initial 7.2 magnitude tremor closely followed by a stronger 7.5 one, wreaks havoc in the South American country; tremors felt in neighbouring Colombia and Brazil

**Agence France-Presse**

LA GUAIRA

A pair of powerful earthquakes that rocked Venezuela have killed at least 188 people and left more than 1,500 hurt, officials said on Thursday as residents searched for loved ones trapped under rubble after many buildings were flattened within minutes.

An international outpouring of aid quickly followed the tremors on Wednesday evening, which the United States Geological Survey (USGS) measured as magnitude 7.2 and 7.5, centred west of the capital Caracas. Tremors from the earthquakes were also felt in neighbouring Colombia and Brazil.

Interim President Delcy Rodriguez said that intense



**Lost in seconds:** A woman holds a boy near a collapsed building in Caracas, Venezuela, on Thursday following the earthquakes. AFP

rescue efforts were going on, noting that the State of La Guaira was hit hard.

"Dozens of buildings have collapsed, and we are currently carrying out very intense rescue efforts to save as many lives as God allows us to save," Ms. Rodriguez said on state televi-

sion on Thursday. "La Guaira State is a true tragedy, and has become a disaster zone."

The first earthquake, with an epicentre 21 kilometres west of the coastal town of Moron, occurred at 6.04 p.m. local time on Wednesday, the USGS said.

Within a minute, a 7.5-magnitude earthquake struck about 45 kilometres away. They struck at depths of 22 kilometres and 10 kilometres, respectively.

Scores of rescuers from the U.S. and several European countries and UN specialists were on their way to help search for survivors, Ms. Rodriguez said while nations including China, India, Brazil, and war-battered Iran offered help. However, threatening to complicate the relief effort, the international airport near Caracas was closed due to "serious damage," Ms. Rodriguez said, with social media videos showing the terminal's ceiling collapsing over panicked travellers.

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# Iran warns against Hormuz Strait crossings without authorisation

Tehran says it plans to impose 'maritime service fees' on ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz; 'If we accepted that you can charge money to use an international waterway, then this will spread throughout the world like a contagion,' says Rubio

**Agence France-Presse**

TEHRAN/MANAMA

Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Thursday warned against any crossings of the Strait of Hormuz without authorisation, saying vessels not complying "will be dealt with", even as U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington wanted a deal with Tehran but not "at any price".

The future of the strait, a vital route for energy shipments that was blocked by Iran during the war, is a key sticking point in negotiations between Tehran and Washington.



**Clear stance:** Marco Rubio speaks with media persons before departing from Bahrain airport, in Manama on Thursday. AFP

Tehran has said it plans to impose what it calls maritime service fees, as opposed to tolls, while the U.S. argues it is an interna-

tional waterway and therefore should not be charged. "The only authorised route for passage through the Strait of Hor-

muz is the route announced by the Islamic Republic of Iran," said the Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of Iran's military. Any crossing without authorisation is "unacceptable and extremely dangerous", they warned in a statement. They also denounced what they said was a new route through the waterway announced by "certain authorities".

**Mr. Rubio said international waterways do not belong to any nation state.** "International waterways do not belong to any nation state. This is a foundational principle in the world today, without

which the world would be in total chaos," Mr. Rubio told a Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in Bahrain. "If in fact we accepted that you can charge money to use an international waterway because it happens to be near your territorial space, well then this will spread throughout the world like a contagion."

"While we want a deal, we don't want a deal at any price," Mr. Rubio added. "We want to ensure... that there is no part of this deal... in any way undermines the security, the stability, or the prosperity of any of our partners in the Gulf region."

# Fresh dispute emerges over Hormuz Strait transit routes

Naval Force of IRGC warns vessels transiting the strait must use only routes officially designated by Iran; 'new shipping route announced by certain authorities sans prior consultation with Tehran'

**M. Kalyanaraman**  
CHENNAI

Though U.S. President Donald Trump has been repeatedly saying the war is over, conflicts over the Strait of Hormuz are still playing out, albeit without the use of force. The MoU signed between the U.S. and Iran says Iran will conduct a dialogue with Oman, the other littoral state of the strait – considered to be among the few allies Iran has in the region – over the future administration of the strait.

But Iran has indicated that no talks have taken place between the two sides on the issue. Both sides have gone ahead and unilaterally announced plans for the temporary period of ship transit envisaged as covering a 60-day period.

On Thursday, the Naval Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) warned that vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz must use only the routes officially designated by Iran, as per a report by the Islamic Republic News Agency. The agency referred to "a new shipping route [that] had been announced by certain authorities without prior consultation with Tehran."

Two days ago, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) announced an evacuation plan for stranded ships and seafarers in the Persian Gulf that



**Turbulent waters:** The Oman plan did not refer to Iran by name and only indicated a route along its coast ships could take. REUTERS

referred to a plan by Oman. Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), had said: "This large-scale operation will be carried out in close cooperation with Iran, Oman, and all other coastal states in the region, the United States, and the maritime industry." But Iran has now issued a disclaimer to this.

A press conference to be addressed by Mr. Dominguez on Thursday was cancelled at the last minute.

He was expected to address the disparities in the two versions and the fact that the IMO statement referred only to the Oman plan.

The Oman plan did not refer to Iran by name and only indicated a route along its coast that ships could take while transiting. It, however, said the traditional route at the centre of the strait, which some 130 ships used every day to

transit the strait, was not safe, referring to mines laid there, and indicated the "northern" route, referring to the Iranian route.

## 'Dangerous route'

In a statement issued early Thursday, the IRGC Navy described the newly announced route as "unacceptable and extremely dangerous," stressing that it had been introduced without the knowledge or coordination of Iranian authorities.

Since the announcement of the ceasefire, ships had started trickling out through the northern route along Iran with its permission and in coordination with the IRGC Navy.

Several weeks later, however, ships started transiting the strait along a southern route near Oman in coordination with the U.S. Navy. When the war started, it was estimated that some 1,000 to 1,500 ships were stranded west

of the Strait of Hormuz. The IMO had indicated that more than 20,000 seafarers were stranded. Two days ago, the IMO brought that figure down to below 11,000 seafarers. Industry sources estimate that at the time of the signing of the MoU, some 500-600 ships were still stranded.

Meanwhile, traffic across the strait has picked up since the signing of the MoU. Lloyd's List estimates that in the week of June 8-14 there were 33 transits. But the following week, when the MoU was signed, some 125 transits took place. This includes some 60 ships that took the Oman route.

Experts are optimistic about eventual cooperation between Oman and Iran. Col. Rajeev Agarwal, a foreign policy expert, says Oman has been the peacemaker in the conflicts and pointed to how the Omani foreign minister was mediating right until the start of attacks by the U.S. and Israel.

Barring a stray missile or two, Iran had refrained from attacking Oman during the war. "Historically, Oman has always maintained a neutral foreign policy. The only trusted and stable relationship in the Gulf region for Iran is with Oman," says Mr. Agarwal, author of the book, "Between Tehran and Tel Aviv - Gaza's Story of Unending War." "Eventually they will work together on the strait."

# Amazon to invest additional \$13 bn in AI, cloud: CEO

**The Hindu Bureau**

BENGALURU

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy on Thursday announced an additional investment of \$13 billion to expand AI and cloud infrastructure in India by 2030. This comes within six months of Amazon announcing \$35 billion in new investments in the country. Mr. Jassy met Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier in the day at New Delhi and reiterated Amazon's long-term commitment to the country.

The CEO highlighted the growing importance of India, where Amazon operated several businesses including ecommerce, AI and cloud, and entertainment among others. He also noted that the company's India business was on a strong growth trajectory with strong customer demand, especially in e-commerce and AWS business.

"We came to India over a decade ago and have since been serving customers, sellers, developers, start-ups and enterprises through our different businesses. The response has been tremendous, with strong growth especially across our e-commerce, AI, and cloud businesses," Mr. Jassy said.

"As we grow Amazon in India, our business priorities continue to align with India's priorities of democratising access to AI, digitising small businesses, creating jobs, and enabling exports. We are investing over \$48 billion in the coming five years to meet the strong demand across our



Amazon CEO Andy Jassy with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday.

business in India and to help the country achieve these priorities," he said.

This takes Amazon's total planned investment in expanding and supporting AI and cloud infrastructure to over \$21 billion between 2026 and 2030, establishing it as one of the largest global AI and cloud infrastructure investors in the country.

According to an Amazon communique, the investment will expand AWS data centre capacity in Mumbai and Hyderabad, giving start-ups, enterprises and government organisations access to custom AI chips, managed AI services, secure and reliable cloud technologies and developer tools to innovate faster, scale rapidly, and serve customers globally.

Amazon's cumulative investments in India from 2010-2030 stand at over \$88 billion, as per the company. The company plans to launch over 20 new fulfilment centres and over 100 new last-mile delivery stations this year, ensuring faster and reliable deliveries nationwide, especially in tier 3 and 4 cities.

# + 'France, Italy want to set up multinational coalition in Lebanon'

**Agence France-Presse**  
ANTIBES

France and Italy want to set up a multinational coalition to succeed the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday.

"We want to launch a coalition for the post-UNIFIL arrangement, obviously in coordination with the European Union and the United Nations, to strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty and that of its armed forces," Mr. Macron said after talks with Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in the town of Antibes on the French Riviera.

The new force would



Emmanuel Macron

help prevent Lebanon's territory from becoming "a foothold for regional escalation," Mr. Macron said.

"Italy and France can absolutely make a difference," the Italian Prime Minister said.

France is one of the biggest contributors to the UN peacekeeping force.

# China defends recent patrols in waters east of Taiwan after 'alarm'

**Associated Press**  
BEIJING

China on Thursday defended its recent patrols in waters east of Taiwan, one day after Britain, France and Germany expressed alarm about what they described as "novel Chinese activity".

While the three European countries said the activity, which they did not specifically identify, endangered regional stability, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said China's law-enforcement and patrol activities were aimed at maintaining regional stability and maritime order.

China deployed coast guard ships in response to

an announcement by Japan and the Philippines that they would discuss their maritime boundaries in waters that Beijing views as its own.

"These are necessary actions in response to Japan's and the Philippines' manipulation of maritime delimitation issues and infringement upon China's maritime rights and interests," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said at a daily briefing.

A joint statement from the de facto embassies of the three European nations in Taiwan said China's actions threatened regional stability, freedom of navigation and the safety of international shipping.

# Bangladesh's Rahman discusses Teesta project during his official visit to Beijing

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, who is on his first official visit to China, on Thursday received Chinese proposals for providing technical assistance for Bangladesh's development plans for the Teesta, a transboundary river shared by Bangladesh and India. The issue featured in talks held at the Great Hall of the People between Mr. Rahman and Chinese Premier Li Qiang, where the two sides signed 13 agreements covering investment cooperation, trade expansion, human resource development, education, health, and media collaboration.

The Teesta has been a



**Foreign trip:** Tarique Rahman is expected to meet Xi Jinping before the conclusion of his visit on June 26. REUTERS

matter of contention between India and Bangladesh, as Dhaka has been demanding a formal sealing of deal that would allow it to secure the necessary amount of water from the river for the lean winter months. The deal was held back earlier because

of perceived objections from the erstwhile West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

China has said the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project would include dredging more than one hundred kilometres of the

river, which would allow better management of the river's water and prevent erosion.

Mr. Rahman is expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping before the conclusion of his visit on June 26. "MoUs were also signed under the framework of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), covering cooperation in health, education, manpower capacity building, and other development-related areas aimed at strengthening institutional and human resource capacities," Bangladesh PMO's spokesperson Mahdi Amin was quoted as saying by Prothom Alo. It was also agreed that Mandarin would be introduced in Bangladesh at the school level.

● ACCORDING TO COMPANY LEADERS AND ANALYSTS, RESTORING BUSINESS CONFIDENCE IN DUBAI WILL TAKE TIME AND MAY REQUIRE MORE INCENTIVES

# Dubai moves to contain economic fallout from Iran strikes

Reuters

Dubai, June 25

DAYS AFTER Iran began striking targets across the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in March, Dubai's top officials gathered hundreds of business leaders to discuss how the Gulf tourism and financial hub could limit the economic damage. The meeting, unusual for its size and timing and reported here for the first time, helped spur measures including a central bank liquidity package, said five people present, who declined to be named because it was private.

Attendees were asked three questions: What should we do to get tourists back? What should we do to get investors back? And how can we support your business? two of the people said, adding that the crown prince of Dubai had circulated between tables asking business leaders for their input.

Dubai has since pledged 2.5 billion dirhams (\$681 million) in support, focused mainly on sectors such as tourism and retail, which have been hit hardest by the conflict.

## Peace agreement

While a preliminary US-Iran peace deal is easing the immediate strains, restoring business confidence in Dubai will take time and may require more incentives, six company leaders and analysts told *Reuters*.

"Investors want signals on how authorities will respond if tensions return, not just how they managed the last shock," said Neil Quilliam, associate fellow at UK-based think tank Chatham House, almost four months after the war began.

Asshelter alerts locked down the UAE, the March 10 meeting was an early signal of authorities' determination to prevent capital flight or an exodus of



Dubai has pledged 2.5 billion dirhams (\$681 million) to support sectors such as tourism and retail. REUTERS

businesses and investors.

Hosted by Helal Saeed Al Marri, director general of Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism, the meeting was also attended by Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum.

Those present at the newly renovated Meydan hotel included real-estate magnate Hussein Sajwani, Emirates airline president Tim Clark and representatives of Rothschild and UBS. The UAE's military and big family-owned companies were also represented.

Government officials told business leaders there would be fiscal and financial support and that teams were working tirelessly on supply chains, the sources said. Several investor calls arranged through banks including JPMorgan and Citi have followed, another three people said. Rothschild, JPMorgan, Citi and UBS declined to comment. DAMAC and Emirates did not respond to requests for comment.

## 'Dubai-it'

Big billboards appeared along the city's roads last week with just the words: "Dubai-it", a new term coined by the government in what it says is a nod to Dubai's history of getting big things done fast and a sign of what is to come. With oil generating less than 2% of its GDP, Dubai sought international companies, Wall Street and Chinese banks, hedge funds

and the wealthy. Its convenient time zone, proximity to the Gulf's sovereign wealth funds and favourable tax regime have drawn capital and jobs.

For Iran, that made it a target that could unsettle international finance, adding to pressure on Washington.

HSBC analysts have cut their 2026 Gulf growth forecast by 5 percentage points since the conflict began and now expect the region to contract for the first time since the covid-19 pandemic. Non-oil growth in Dubai and Abu Dhabi could fall 8 percentage points or more year-on-year, they said.

While restaurant tables are filling again and flights have largely resumed, hotel occupancy has plummeted. Trade flows are also shifting, with cargo increasingly moving through Oman and Saudi Arabia to avoid the Strait of Hormuz, bypassing Dubai.

# Amazon to invest additional \$13 bn in AI, cloud: CEO

**The Hindu Bureau**

BENGALURU

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy on Thursday announced an additional investment of \$13 billion to expand AI and cloud infrastructure in India by 2030. This comes within six months of Amazon announcing \$35 billion in new investments in the country. Mr. Jassy met Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier in the day at New Delhi and reiterated Amazon's long-term commitment to the country.

The CEO highlighted the growing importance of India, where Amazon operated several businesses including ecommerce, AI and cloud, and entertainment among others. He also noted that the company's India business was on a strong growth trajectory with strong customer demand, especially in e-commerce and AWS business.

"We came to India over a decade ago and have since been serving customers, sellers, developers, start-ups and enterprises through our different businesses. The response has been tremendous, with strong growth especially across our e-commerce, AI, and cloud businesses," Mr. Jassy said.

"As we grow Amazon in India, our business priorities continue to align with India's priorities of democratising access to AI, digitising small businesses, creating jobs, and enabling exports. We are investing over \$48 billion in the coming five years to meet the strong demand across our



Amazon CEO Andy Jassy with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday.

business in India and to help the country achieve these priorities," he said.

This takes Amazon's total planned investment in expanding and supporting AI and cloud infrastructure to over \$21 billion between 2026 and 2030, establishing it as one of the largest global AI and cloud infrastructure investors in the country.

According to an Amazon communique, the investment will expand AWS data centre capacity in Mumbai and Hyderabad, giving start-ups, enterprises and government organisations access to custom AI chips, managed AI services, secure and reliable cloud technologies and developer tools to innovate faster, scale rapidly, and serve customers globally.

Amazon's cumulative investments in India from 2010-2030 stand at over \$88 billion, as per the company. The company plans to launch over 20 new fulfilment centres and over 100 new last-mile delivery stations this year, ensuring faster and reliable deliveries nationwide, especially in tier 3 and 4 cities.

# If passport is not proof of citizenship, what is



DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

THE MINISTRY of External Affairs (MEA) Wednesday clarified that a passport is primarily a travel document and not a standard proof of citizenship. The statement, made on Passport Seva Divas, triggered confusion. For most Indians, the passport is the most authoritative document issued by the state — carrying the Republic's name, accepted across the world and issued only after verification by government authorities.

The MEA's clarification, however, reflects a longstanding position: a passport is issued because the government is satisfied a person is an Indian citizen, but it does not create citizenship, nor is it conclusive proof of citizenship if challenged in law.

## Citizenship a legal status

Articles 5 to 11 of the Constitution and the Citizenship Act, 1955 define who is an Indian citizen. Significantly, neither identifies any single document as proof of citizenship.

Instead, citizenship is treated as a legal status arising from facts such as birth, parentage, domicile, or naturalisation. Documents serve as evidence of those facts. For a person born in India, citizenship depends on when they were born and, in certain cases, the citizenship status of their parents. For someone naturalised, it depends on compliance with statutory conditions.

This distinction is reflected in an answer given by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Parliament in February 2020. Asked whether Aadhaar, passport, voter ID, PAN card or birth certificate constitute valid proof of citizenship, the government said: "Acquisition of Indian Citizenship is governed by The Citizenship Act, 1955 and rules made thereunder. Citizenship of India can be acquired by birth or descent or registration or naturalisation or incorporation of territory. The eligibility criteria for acquisition and determination of citizenship is as per the provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955."

Notably, it did not identify any of the documents as citizenship documents. Yet, under the Citizenship Rules, 2003, those seeking Indian citizenship under certain provisions produce a copy of their parents'

## • WHO IS AN INDIAN CITIZEN?

Under the Citizenship Act of 1955, there are four ways to obtain citizenship:

**1. Citizenship by birth:** For birthright citizenship, those born in India between 1950 and 1987 are citizens.

• For those born between 1987 and 2003, citizenship is accorded only if either parent is a citizen of India at the time of their birth.

• For those born after 2003, citizenship is accorded if only if either parent is a citizen at the time of their birth and the other is not an illegal immigrant.

**2. Citizenship by descent:** A person born outside India and who has at least one Indian parent will be granted citizenship, provided that the birth is registered within one year with the Indian consulate in the jurisdiction.

**3. Citizenship by registration:** This is for persons related to an Indian citizen through marriage or ancestry.



**4. Citizenship by naturalisation:**

Naturalisation certificate can be granted to a person who isn't an illegal immigrant and has lived in India for 12 months continuously before applying.

• In the 14 years before the 12-month period, the person must have lived in India for at least 11 years. This is relaxed for some categories.

• Citizenship is treated as a legal status arising from facts such as birth, parentage, domicile or naturalisation.

• Documents serve as evidence of those facts. A **passport** is issued because the government is satisfied a person is a citizen. It does not create citizenship.

**Waiver clause:** If the Centre believes the applicant has rendered distinguished service to science, philosophy, art, literature, world peace or human progress, it may waive all or any of the conditions in the Act. This is how the Dalai Lama or Adnan Sami, the Pakistani singer, got Indian citizenship.

- BY APURVA VISHWANATH

passports to prove they are Indian citizens.

## Eligibility for passport

Section 20 of the Act empowers the Centre to issue a passport or travel document even to non-Indian citizen if it considers such issuance necessary in public interest.

MEA sources said the provision is used in special cases. "Largely, cases where say an Indian origin person becomes stateless due to geo-political developments, or someone stateless is in India and must travel abroad," an official said. Historically, Tibetan refugees and Sri Lankan Tamils in India have been issued special travel documents when visiting other countries, sources said. In 2023, the Madras High Court asked the Centre to grant a passport to a Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee under Section 20 of the Passport Act.

## What courts have held

During hearings on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar last year, a Supreme Court bench of Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joyymalya Bagchi observed: "We would like you to clarify...we have repeatedly passed order that the list illustratively indicates 11 documents...if you see those 11, apart from passport and birth certificates, none are conclusive proof of citizenship."

The observation appeared to place pass-

## Common principle

In the UK and US, too, passports are issued because the state has determined that a person is a citizen; they do not themselves create citizenship.

• The difference is that both countries have more robust civil registration systems and, for naturalised citizens, formal citizenship certificates.

Articles 5 to 11 of the Constitution and the Citizenship Act, 1955 define who is an Indian citizen. Neither identifies any single document as citizenship proof

naturalisation under Sections 5 and 6 of the Citizenship Act. But the overwhelming majority of Indians are citizens by birth.

India's civil registration system evolved unevenly, and universal birth registration is a relatively recent phenomenon. For millions of older Indians, citizenship has traditionally been inferred from a combination of records — electoral rolls, school certificates, land records, birth certificates, passports and other government documents — rather than through a single definitive credential.

The closest India came to creating such a document was through the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The legal architecture was put in place under the Vajpayee government through the Citizenship Rules, 2003. The rules envisaged a National Register of Indian Citizens, along with local and state-level registers, and contemplated the issuance of identity cards linked to citizenship. The idea resurfaced during the UPA years in a tussle between the Home Ministry and the UIDAI over whether identity verification should precede citizenship verification.

In a conversation with *The Indian Express*, former Union Home Secretary R K Singh recalled that senior Home Ministry officials repeatedly argued that Aadhaar could not serve as proof of citizenship. "At that time, we said it would enable large number of infiltrators to get documents. The PM held a meeting on this. Nandan Nilekani was there. We put our point. I was very clear it cannot be a proof of citizenship. Nilekani agreed that his verification was peripheral."

"As far as passport is concerned, its verification levels are stronger. But passport was not designed to be a document of citizenship. It was always imagined as a travel document. The idea of NRC was tied to providing a proof of citizenship," he added.

However, the NRC was never rolled out nationwide. The exercise became politically contentious and was eventually overtaken by the controversy surrounding the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and fears of a nationwide citizenship verification exercise.

The only large-scale implementation occurred in Assam between 2015 and 2019, where applicants had to establish links to legacy records predating March 24, 1971. Nearly 19 lakh names were left out of the final list, many because of documentary inconsistencies, spelling variations, missing records and difficulties in proving family linkages.

ports and birth certificates in a higher evidentiary category than other documents accepted by the Election Commission for voter verification. Yet, in cases dealing directly with citizenship disputes, courts have often looked beyond passports.

In 2013, the Bombay High Court refused relief to four persons accused of being illegal immigrants despite their producing passports (which were later terminated), Aadhaar cards and birth certificates.

In the 2005 *Sarbananda Sonowal v Union of India* judgment, the Supreme Court underscored that the burden of proving citizenship rests on the person claiming it. "There is good and sound reason for placing the burden of proof upon the person concerned who asserts to be a citizen of a particular country," the court said.

In *State of Andhra Pradesh v Abdul Khader* (1962), the SC treated a passport as evidence of nationality but examined constitutional criteria such as birth, domicile and migration history for citizenship.

## The bigger problem

Unlike many countries, India does not issue a universal citizenship certificate for all citizens. Certificates of citizenship are for a limited category of people — those who acquire citizenship through registration or