

OBC creamy-layer criteria: SC likely to set up special Bench

Abhinay Lakshman

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to consider setting up a special Bench to hear the Centre's plea seeking clarification on the applicability of its March 11 judgment on creamy-layer criteria for Other Backward Class (OBC) candidates of the civil services examination held in 2025.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) wants the court to let it proceed with service allocation of the 958 candidates recommended by the Union Public Service Commission on the basis of the wealth/income test criteria applied before the March 11 verdict in *Union of India v. Rohith Nathan*.



The govt. has sought clarification on a March 11 judgment by the top court on the OBC criteria.

Retrospective implementation will be “extremely difficult” and will cause a “cascading effect” on settled service matters from 2012, which will extend its impact to “all categories, including the Unreserved category”, the Centre told the court.

The March 11 ruling had

directed the Centre to create supernumerary posts for OBC candidates who had been excluded from reservation benefits on the ground that they fell within the creamy layer solely because of their parents' salaries.

The DoPT warned that this could trigger a barrage of claims or contestations from candidates denied OBC non-creamy layer status, as well as from those who did not seek such certification at the time of recruitment, examination, or admission, but may now seek to rely on the judgment. It would also “drastically” alter the seniority landscape, the DoPT said.

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SC likely to form special Bench on OBC criteria

The SC's March 11 judgment laid down the law on how to interpret the income/wealth test component of the creamy layer exclusion framework for OBCs, for the purposes of reservations in public education and employment. The court specifically considered how the income test should be understood in the case of candidates whose parents are employed in jobs for which no equivalence with government posts has been established.

In the absence of an established equivalence between the relevant posts, the income test, including salary income, was being applied to rule out OBC candidates whose parents are employed outside government service, while OBC candidates whose parents are government servants were being subjected to a test that did not include parental salary component. This could amount to "hostile discrimination", the court said. It directed the Centre to give effect to its interpretation of the income test by creating supernumerary posts for the petitioners, that is, OBC candidates excluded from the quota because they fell within the creamy layer solely because of the salaries of their parents employed in public sector undertakings or private sector, where no equivalence had been established with government service.

The Centre argued that implementing the decision "may adversely affect the spirit and intention of the reservation policy". "The direction to create supernumerary posts addresses only the numerical problem of accommodation; it does not resolve these collateral consequences for seniority, promotion and cadre placement," it said. Less than a week ago, Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma had told the Principal Bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal that the Centre was implementing the March 11 decision. *(With inputs from PTI)*

Congress urges PM to scrap caste census questionnaire

Kharge, Rahul object to open-ended format proposed for recording caste details; they say the govt. must formulate a new survey form after consulting political parties, experts, and the public

Sandeep Phukan

NEW DELHI

The Leaders of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, respectively, have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding that the questionnaire for the caste census be scrapped, and a new one be prepared to ensure accurate enumeration of castes.

In their joint letter, the two leaders urged the government to consult experts, political parties, and the public while framing the new questionnaire, and use the caste surveys conducted in Bihar and Telangana as workable models to follow.

They also suggested a drop-down list of castes to ensure that different names, sub-castes, and linguistic variations do not lead to the same caste being recorded separately.

"We do not accept the caste census being conducted in the current manner," Mr. Kharge and Mr. Gandhi said, urging the government to "scrap the ex-



Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge at a press briefing in New Delhi. FILE PHOTO

isting questionnaire and formulate a new one after consulting political parties, experts, and the general public".

The letter, dated August 20 was released by Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh at a press conference on Tuesday.

'Whitewash'

The present exercise amounted to a "whitewash", Mr. Ramesh said, accusing the government of adopting a methodology that could undermine the purpose of the caste census. "The Congress party believes that the way the caste census is being con-

ducted in the country is a betrayal of the people," Mr. Ramesh said. "We will not accept the way this census is being conducted because it is just a whitewash."

"The notification on the caste census informed 40 questions to be asked, and 10th question would be linked to caste; it is a form of self-sabotage, will not ensure social justice," Mr. Ramesh said.

Accurate caste data is necessary for framing policies on education, employment, welfare, and social justice, Mr. Kharge and Mr. Gandhi said. They objected to the open-ended for-

mat proposed for recording caste details, arguing that the same caste could be known by different names, sub-castes, and linguistic variants in different parts of the country.

Absence of BC category

If these variations were recorded separately, they said, a single caste could be fragmented into thousands of names, making the resulting dataset unreliable. They also pointed to the absence of the term "Backward Class" from the questionnaire, saying this could prevent an accurate assessment of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) population.

The two leaders proposed that a standardised caste list be prepared using existing government lists, including those of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes, along with material from the Anthropological Survey of India.

This was the third letter from the Congress leadership to Mr. Modi on the caste census, with the previous two letters receiving no response, Mr. Ramesh said.

Rajnath approves transfer of missile technology to domestic defence industry

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, August 25

IN A significant step towards building India's conventional missile force, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Tuesday approved the transfer of technology for all conventional missile systems developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to the Indian defence industry. The decision paves the way for domestic production of these missile systems by private players.

So far, the government had typically relied only on Defence PSU Bharat Dynamics Limited and certain in-house production capabilities of DRDO, while joint ventures like BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited with Russia manufactured the supersonic cruise missile BrahMos.

Officials familiar with the development told *The Indian Express* that the initiative could start with the DRDO-developed beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM) ASTRA, surface-to-air anti-radiation missiles RUDRAM, VSHORADS, anti-tank guided missile NAG as well as short-range missile systems like the Naval Anti-Ship Missile (NASM).

The broader goal, however, is to allow the Indian defence industry to produce all conventional missile systems, they said.

That said, Agni and the K-series missiles will not be included in the technology



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

transfer as they are strategic missiles, the officials highlighted.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Defence noted this Transfer of Technology of conventional missile systems marks an important milestone in promoting greater participation of domestic industries in the defence ecosystem by enabling them to undertake indigenous production, as per applicable qualifications, certifications and regulatory requirements.

It added that the provision will enable successful transition of missile system development to industrial production, reflecting the continued efforts of DRDO to leverage the capabil-

ities of the Indian industry, "The objective is to enhance domestic manufacturing capabilities, strengthen the defence industrial base and create opportunities for the participation of Indian MSMEs and other technology partners in the supply chain," it noted.

The Ministry stated the initiative aims to enhance operational capability, reduce import dependence and increase domestic value addition, while supporting growth of India's defence manufacturing sector.

"DRDO remains committed to working closely with Indian industry to facilitate the transfer and absorption of advanced defence technologies and to further strengthen the country's indigenous defence capabilities," it added.

The enhanced production of conventional missile systems by the private industry will further aid the creation of a conventional missile force. The US-Israel-Iran conflict had revealed the large-scale use of conventional missile systems by all sides to target each other.



कोटा विश्वविद्यालय, कोटा

महाश्व भोमसिंह मार्ग, कबीर सर्कल के पास, कोटा

निविदा सूचना संख्या-17/2026-27

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(मुरलीधर प्रतिहार)
कुलसचिव

UBN:- UOK2627SLRC00018

India, China discuss ways to push border delimitation

Both countries stress peace in border areas during 25th Special Representatives' talks in Beijing; ties 'steadily returning to normalcy', says Doval; both nations should learn from history, says Wang

Ananth Krishnan

BEIJING

India and China on Tuesday said they had discussed advancing talks on delimiting parts of the disputed border, as National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met in Beijing.

A statement from the Indian Embassy here said both sides had "discussed ways to further expand bilateral cooperation, maintain stability, and ensure peace and tranquility in the border areas, and make progress on boundary delimitation, while sustaining the ongoing work on transboundary cooperation".

China's Foreign Ministry highlighted progress on border delimitation in a



National Security Adviser Ajit Doval holds discussions with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on Tuesday. ANANTH KRISHNAN

statement issued after the 25th round of talks between the two Special Representatives (SR) on the boundary question, saying both sides "held in-depth discussions on advancing border delimitation negotiations, strengthening border management and control, improving mechanism building, and promoting cross-border cooperation". However,

neither side provided details on which parts of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) were being explored for possible delimitation. At last year's SR talks, both sides agreed to set up a working group to explore "early harvest" border delimitation in some areas along the LAC.

On broader bilateral ties, Mr. Doval said Prime Minister Narendra Modi

and Chinese President Xi Jinping had given "a clear and positive direction" to the India-China relationship which has been "steadily returning to normalcy". He said this round of SR talks was "very important particularly in the wake of the BRICS Summit to happen shortly." Mr. Xi is expected to attend the September 12 meet in New Delhi, on his first visit to India in seven years.

The Chinese statement quoted Mr. Wang as saying: "China and India should draw lessons from history, place the boundary question appropriately in bilateral relations, and keep moving forward".

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WILL BE VISITING INDIA AFTER 7 YEARS AMID EFFORTS TO RESTORE TIES

Xi likely to attend BRICS in Delhi next month with large delegation

Chinese advance team arrives to prepare the ground for visit

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, August 25

CHINESE PRESIDENT Xi Jinping is likely to attend the summit of BRICS leaders in New Delhi on September 12 and 13, *The Indian Express* has learnt. He last visited India in October 2019, months before PLA incur-

sions along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh triggered a military standoff between the two countries.

It is learnt that the Chinese side has conveyed to New Delhi that Xi is likely to come for the leaders' summit. An advance team from China has arrived for the security and protocol arrangements to prepare for the President's possible visit.

It is expected that Xi will come with a large delegation of officials, businessmen and state-backed media representatives.

Xi's attendance at the BRICS

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NSA Ajit Doval with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing, Tuesday. PTI

In Beijing, Doval and Wang look to 'make progress on boundary delimitation'

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, August 25

NATIONAL SECURITY Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who are the special representatives of their countries on the boundary issue, held talks in Beijing Tuesday and the Indian embassy later said they discussed ways to

"make progress on boundary delimitation" while "sustaining the ongoing work on transboundary cooperation".

Before his talks with Wang, Doval met Chinese Vice President Han Zheng and China said it urged India to view and handle their relationship from a "strategic and long-term

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Xi Jinping

summit, the most anticipated visit, will add to efforts by New Delhi and Beijing to restore ties that plummeted after the start of the border standoff in 2020.

He last visited India in October 2019 when he travelled to Mamallapuram near Chennai for the second informal bilateral summit of leaders.

In October 2024, Xi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi met on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan to start the process of restoration of ties. The disengagement of troops in eastern Ladakh was completed next month.

More than 50,000 troops are still deployed on either side of the LAC in the region and the process of de-escalation and de-induction of troops has not yet

taken place.

But in the two years since, the two sides have made significant progress in stabilising relations with direct flights, resumption of visas, easing of curbs on Chinese firms and the revival of the pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar.

Sources said the September summit will mark two years of the rapprochement between the two sides, and India is keen to host all BRICS leaders. Barring any unforeseen development, participation at the highest level has been conveyed to New Delhi.

The venue has not yet been announced, but the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi is likely to be the preferred choice, sources said.

The Prime Minister's Office has conveyed to the participating countries of BRICS that there will be no bilateral visits along with the summit, but there will

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EXPLAINED

The steps taken

Although troops are still massed along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, India and China have been taking a series of steps to restore ties that took a hit following Chinese incursions. These include direct flights, resumption of visas, easing of curbs on Chinese firms, revival of the pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar.

be bilateral meetings with the visiting leaders.

Xi comes at a time when some challenges have emerged on the bilateral front – on the issue of visas for Indian business persons travelling to China, and reports of tension along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh.

Last Saturday, speaking on the situation with China, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said, “I think we went through a particularly bad patch between the summer of 2020 and the autumn of 2024, and that was primarily an outcome of the situation in the border areas... At the end of the day, peace and tranquility in the border areas is a prerequisite for good relations, and the state of the border, to a very large measure, naturally would determine the state of the relations.”

“Having said that, I think naturally, if assuming things are stable and the needle is more cooperative, obviously, I mean we are both very big economies. In many ways, we are markets to each other. We are part of the supply chain. They industrialised much faster and much bigger and much earlier, largely because of many of the policies we advocate,” he said.

Repeat

'Border stability is an immediate priority'

'Institutionalising stability' on the border is the immediate task for both countries rather than expecting a sudden 'dramatic settlement', says Chinese strategic affairs scholar Hu Shisheng; both sides have incentive for a favourable political atmosphere for possible leader-level interaction, he adds

Ananth Krishnan

BEIJING

As India and China on Tuesday held the 25th round of border talks between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing, Hu Shisheng, a leading Chinese strategic affairs scholar on South Asia, said "institutionalising stability" is the immediate task for both countries even as "structural differences" in the relationship remained.

"On the border, I would expect the immediate focus to be less on a dramatic settlement and more on institutionalising stability. The priority is to prevent misunderstanding and miscalculation along the LAC, strengthen military

and diplomatic communication, and turn last year's idea of an 'early harvest' into an operational process," Mr. Hu, who is Director of the South Asia Institute at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) in Beijing, told *The Hindu*.

He was referring to an agreement at last year's 24th round on establishing an Expert Group under the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on border affairs to explore "early harvest on boundary delimitation".

Mr. Hu said the timing of Mr. Doval's visit, before the September 12 BRICS Summit in New Delhi, added significance to the visit with Mr. Xi expected to visit India.



A satellite image taken in June 2020 shows the Line of Actual Control and Patroling Point 14 in the eastern Ladakh sector. AFP

"Both sides have a strong incentive to keep the border stable and create a favourable political atmosphere for possible leader-level interaction," he said, adding that he viewed maintaining stability on the border, achieving "concrete and

operational progress" on "early harvest" outcomes, and creating favourable conditions for the BRICS Summit as immediate priorities.

At the strategic level, he added, Mr. Doval's visit would help "clear potential obstacles ahead of the

BRICS Summit and lay the groundwork for possible leader-level engagement."

He added that ensuring no unexpected border incident before the summit, setting the political tone and identifying deliverables for a possible leaders' meeting, and coordinating the handover of the BRICS agenda from India to China, which takes over as chair next year, would be three essential issues on the table.

Gradual normalisation

The view in Beijing, as in Delhi, is that the normalisation in relations since the October 2024 meeting between Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi is likely to remain gradual and measured.

"As for the broader normalisation, I would de-

scribe it as strategic risk management rather than strategic realignment," Mr. Hu said.

"Recent difficulties in India-U.S. relations may give New Delhi greater incentives to diversify its strategic options, while the relative stabilisation of China-U.S. ties reduces some of the external pressure on China-India relations. But the structural differences between China and India have not disappeared. What we are seeing is an attempt to build a more stable form of competitive coexistence - keeping the border peaceful, restoring practical cooperation, and expanding coordination through BRICS and the Global South without pretending that strategic competition no longer exists."

‘India, Japan eye joint investments in Africa for critical minerals’

Sandeep Singh

Tokyo, August 25

AS INDIA and Japan recognise the world's growing dependency on China for critical minerals, business leaders across the two countries are deliberating on the possibility of investing jointly in Africa to secure their supply and expand mining capabilities, said Anant Goenka, FICCI President and Vice Chairman of RPG Group.

“I think we can work jointly, whether it is negotiating together, sharing an opportunity with each other of whatever supplies that each have. Critical minerals are going to be short, and it is a challenge in the world and has been very critical. My experience is that either they are physically located in a few countries, or they have been blocked by a few countries. So, it's going to be an important area that we have to focus on, whether it is mining capabilities or securing them for supplies,” said Goenka.

Over 200 business leaders from India are currently travelling to Japan along with the Commerce and Industry Min-

ister Piyush Goyal, to explore avenues for investment and partnership.

Speaking to the media, Goenka said that the business-to-business meetings in Tokyo have been looking to explore joint venture partnerships and investment opportunities in India. He said there is both opportunity and excitement, and while investments in the recent past have come within the targeted time, they are now looking at the next phase of investment.

“Few sectors that we are focusing on are AI, data centres, shipbuilding, critical minerals, steel, and semiconductors,” he said, adding that the other area they have discussed is how to evolve and focus on MSMEs, and how Indian MSMEs can learn from Japan's high-quality MSME industry and build capacity. Goenka expressed concern while speaking on the issue of the widening trade deficit with Japan since the signing of the economic partnership agreement in 2011.

The correspondent is in Tokyo at the invitation of FICCI.

FULL REPORT ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Beijing accelerates South China Sea build-up with new installations

Reuters

Hong Kong, August 25

NEW INSTALLATIONS have been sighted on an islet near Antelope Reef in Paracels archipelago of disputed South China Sea where analysts believe China is building its largest military base, according to satellite imagery reviewed by Reuters.

Security analysts say while it is too early to gauge definitively the likely function of the three-pronged construction on Yagong Island, it could be the start of an early warning radar facility to support eventual installations

on Antelope Reef.

Vantor, a commercial provider of satellite images, said it took the latest image on August 17, noting in other images that construction started in March and April.

While the purpose of the buildings was not certain, "several structures on Yagong Reef resemble other military radar/early warning facilities seen elsewhere in South China Sea and are likely associated with the ultimate military functions of nearby Antelope Reef," a Vantor spokesperson said.

Reuters reported last week

that China had completed the first phase of construction at Antelope Reef, highlighting the South China Sea as an increasingly militarised arena between China and the United States and its allies — and one that could prove critical in any future conflict over Taiwan.

The Antelope Reef images showed an artificial island nearly 6 km long, with a straight line of coast longer than 3 km that some analysts see as a potential runway. Yagong is far smaller, 14 km to the northeast of Antelope. Both lie within the Crescent Group in the west-

ern Paracels. The Chinese defence ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

China has not acknowledged the construction of a new military base, and state media have said Antelope will meet civilian needs such as weather forecasting, fisheries protection and scientific research.

China has occupied the Paracels since 1974 when it seized them from the navy of the former South Vietnam. Vietnam, which claims the entire grouping as its own, has moved in recent years to expand its own network of bases in the Spratlys.



A satellite view of Yagong Reef in the Crescent Group of the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. REUTERS

Trade war: Canada declares retaliatory tariffs on \$20 billion worth of US goods

Reuters

Ottawa, August 25

CANADA ON Tuesday announced retaliatory tariffs on \$19.94 billion worth of United States goods, matching dollar-for-dollar new duties imposed by Washington, and unveiled financial support for Canadian businesses and workers caught in the escalating trade war.

The counter-tariffs take effect on US goods from September 8 and will impose duties of 15%, 25% and 50% across 700 products imported from south of the border.

In terms of financial support for affected workers and industries, Canada announced a \$5.4 billion package of new and enhanced measures including support for small and medium-sized businesses, a stream for funding cash flows of companies, and support for workers at risk due to the new tariffs.

From Saturday, President Donald Trump's new 50% tariffs across \$20 billion of Canadian imports took effect after talks between the two countries to avert the tariffs collapsed.

The new tit-for-tat tariffs mark a new low in the Canada-US relationship. "Our dollar-for-dollar, rate for rate counter-tariffs as well as a multi-billion dollar support package will pro-

Lake Ontario to 'Lake America': Trump's new idea

Washington: President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he is considering changing the name of Lake Ontario to "Lake America" as the trade war between the United States and Canada intensifies.

"The United States is giving serious consideration to changing the name of Lake Ontario to Lake America in that we don't expect to doing much business with Ontario any longer," Trump said Tuesday on social media.

Ontario is Canada's most populous province and is home to country's auto industry. AP

tect workers, farmers, families, and businesses," Canada's Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne said.

The new tariffs are designed so that the impact on Canadian consumers and businesses is minimal and could still hit the US, a government official said.

The 50% tariffs are on some important sectors such as steel, aluminum, furniture and clothing, 25% tariffs on cheese, appliances, while 15% tariffs will be on electronics and tools.

‘Waning dependence on H-1B, India spent \$1 bn on STEM in U.S.’

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Strongly responding to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)’s proposal to fix H-1B visa fee at \$1,03,265 for new applicants, technology industry body Nasscom on Tuesday emphasised that the H-1B visa programme had long served an important purpose in addressing short-term skill gaps in the U.S.

According to the U.S. administration, the fee would recover immigration system costs and encourage employers to hire and train American workers instead of relying on foreign labour, Nasscom stated.

“It is also important to



The proposal to fix H-1B fee at \$1,03,265 was made by the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security

recognise that, over the past 5 years, the number of H-1B employees of Indian technology companies operating has reduced significantly, as companies have steadily expanded local hiring,” the apex body said. Nasscom further

maintained that the industry had also spent more than \$ 1.1 billion for strengthening the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) pipeline in the U.S., working with more than 130 universities and colleges, impacting 2.9 million students and upskilling more than 2,55,000 employees.

“A proposed increase in visa fees must therefore be viewed in the context of the programme’s original purpose of enabling access to temporary skills where there is a shortage in the U.S.,” Nasscom reminded the administration while promising it will remain actively engaged with key stakeholders on the matter.

CHINA SAYS ITS TIES WITH TEHRAN LAWFUL, SHOULD NOT BE DISRUPTED

Iran vows to resist widened sanctions, says US seeks talks

'Mediator' Pak says 'significant progress' in talks over Strait

Reuters

Cairo, Washington, August 25

IRAN DENOUNCED on Tuesday expanded US sanctions aimed at isolating its economy as an act of "gross lawlessness", expressing confidence that many countries would not join the pressure campaign.

Almost six months into a conflict the US has struggled to resolve, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent unveiled the measures on Monday but stopped short of the most punishing options.

While he said countries that continued trading with Iran risked being forced out of the dollar-based financial system, he declined to give a timeline or identify which may be targeted, saying he would give them time to comply with new directive.

There have been signals of a potential return to mediation to end the war. Iran and Oman said they had discussed a proposal on Tuesday for a "joint temporary navigational corridor" through the strait and a plan to clear the strait of mines.

US President Donald Trump repeated earlier assertions that all mines in the strait had been



Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz near the beach of Bandar Abbas, Iran, on Tuesday. REUTERS

removed or detonated, adding Iran had been told that any ship or boat placing new mines would be destroyed.

Iran's Foreign Ministry described the latest US sanctions as a threat to international law and the UN charter, saying "the issue is no longer limited to Iran". "No honourable state that values its sovereignty and national interests will accept normalization of such gross lawlessness and systematic bullying," it said.

China has been the biggest buyer of Iranian oil for several years. However, the US blockade of Iran's ports has cut those oil flows to China since Washington resumed it in mid-July.

Trump has said he expects to host Chinese President Xi Jinping next month, and US is keen to avoid any curbs on China's exports of critical minerals.

China said Tuesday its cooperation with Iran was conducted within the framework of international law and should not be interfered with. Iranian Economy Minister Ali Madanizadeh said neither China nor Russia had "accepted" the US measures, predicting that other countries would resist them.

Mediator Pakistan made "significant progress" in the latest talks with Tehran, which focused on preventing further escalation and reopening the Strait, Pakistani military said.

Abbas Golroo, head of the foreign relations committee in Iran parliament, said Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir had delivered a message from the US to Iran Monday. "It seems the main goal was to revive the stopped political process," he said.

There was no immediate

US Secret Service 'aware' of Iranian video threatening Barron Trump

Washington: The US Secret Service has confirmed it is aware Iranian state media has aired a video that appears to threaten life of Barron Trump, President Donald Trump's youngest son.

"The US Secret Service is aware of the video and investigates anything that can be perceived as a threat toward our protectees," Secret Service spokesman Nate Herring said.

"Out of concern for operational security, we do not discuss matters of protective intelligence," she added.

CNN previously reported that the Secret Service had knowledge of the Barron Trump threat. AP

comment from the White House or the State Department.

Iran expressed a general willingness to resume peace talks during meetings between Iranian and Pakistani officials while expressing concern about sanctions, a Pakistani source said. "Pakistan told them the US will reverse those decisions either before, or during a new round of negotiations," the official said.

India, China discuss border delimitation

The Chinese Foreign Minister said at the start of the talks that besides resuming the SR talks last year, institutional mechanisms between the two countries were resuming and both sides have been “working hard to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas.” At last year’s talks, he noted both sides “reached a set of common understandings on delimitation, on border management, mechanism building and cross border cooperation.” “Over the past year, our two sides have worked to deliver them on the ground and have made good progress,” he said.

The Chinese statement said the two sides “reaffirmed their commitment to the 2005 Political Guiding Principles, and, in a spirit of mutual respect and mutual understanding, will leverage the Special Representatives’ mechanism to pursue a fair, reasonable and mutually-acceptable package solution to the boundary question.”

“I am happy over the past year our relationship has been steadily returning to normalcy,” Mr. Doval said. According to the Chinese statement, Mr. Wang called for “gradually building a positive narrative on China-India boundary affairs, making dialogue, peace, consultation and cooperation the mainstream and injecting positive factors into the sound and stable development of bilateral relations”.

Rohingya refugees rally in Bangladesh camps demanding return to Myanmar

Associated Press

COX'S BAZAR

Tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar living in dozens of camps in Bangladesh held a rally Tuesday to demand their safe return to their home state, nine years after they fled a government crackdown.

The demonstrators urged the international community to ensure security in Rakhine state as they marked what they call the “Ninth Anniversary of Rohingya Genocide Day”.

More than one million refugees from Myanmar’s Rohingya ethnic and religious minority now live in the sprawling camps around the Cox’s Bazar dis-



Exodus anniversary: Rohingya demonstrators gather during an event at a refugee camp in Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh. AP

trict of southeastern Bangladesh.

Most of them fled across the border in a mass exodus in 2017 after Buddhist-majority Myanmar launched a crackdown in Rakhine, following an attack by a Rohingya Muslim

insurgent group.

The Bangladesh government earlier attempted to start the repatriation at least twice, but it did not work out as none of the refugees was willing to go back, citing security concerns. Bangladesh says it

will not force anyone to return.

“Whether it is the Arakan Army or the Myanmar military, as long as they continue playing this double game, the situation in Arakan, or Rakhine, will not become safe. Does that mean we are expected to remain here for another 50 years,” Rohingya refugee leader Sayed Ullah said on Tuesday. Arakan is the old name of Rakhine.

Earlier, Myanmar’s military-backed government said that more than 300,000 Rohingya refugees living in camps in Bangladesh are former residents of Rakhine state and that it will accept their return once security conditions improve.

• HISTORY

The century-long evolution of the demand for a Gorkha state

Sweety Kumari
Kolkata, August 25

THE UNION Ministry of Home Affairs on Saturday constituted a high-level committee to prepare a framework for a “permanent political solution” to the Gorkha issue. This came after a meeting of Gorkha leaders, Home Minister Amit Shah and West Bengal government representatives in Siliguri.

Roots in differential treatment

The Gorkhas’ movement for a separate administrative identity is among the oldest of its kind in India, going back over 100 years.

Darjeeling and its adjacent areas — including Kalimpong, Kurseong, the Terai, and the Dooars — are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically distinct from the rest of West Bengal. Its residents speak Nepali and have faced racial profiling. This persistent alienation has fueled a deep-seated identity crisis, driving the demand for a separate state to affirm their identity as Indian citizens.

But its origins go further back. The movement began in 1907, when the Dar-

jeeling Hillmen’s Association, led by Sonam Wangel Laden La, submitted a petition to the Minto-Morley Reforms Committee seeking to separate Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri from Bengal.

It highlighted the differences between the populations of Darjeeling and the plains, and argued that a legislative body composed mostly of representatives from the plains could not be expected to understand or appreciate the needs and aspirations of the hill people.

Joined by other groups, members of the movement later presented a case to the Simon Commission (1929) and British officials Sir Samuel Hoare and Lord Pethick-Lawrence for an alternative governance system, like a Chief Commissioner’s Province, for direct rule. By 1947, the undivided Communist Party of India (CPI) formally submitted a memorandum for “Gorkhas-*than*” to interim leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan.

The Gorkhaland movement

In the 1980s, the demand for a separate

New panel’s mandate

● The new committee is tasked with examining all dimensions of the Gorkha issue within the framework of the Constitution.

● Alongside evaluating structural governance, the panel will examine financial assistance for the region and review a roadmap to grant ST status to 11 key Gorkha communities.

state took on a violent, high-profile dimension under Subhas Ghising, founder of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), who coined the term “Gorkhaland”. The resulting unrest led to the creation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988, a semi-autonomous body that governed the hills for 23 years.

In 2007, politician Bimal Gurung formed the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM), reigniting the statehood demand and leading to the establishment of the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2011 to replace the DGHC.

The hills experienced their longest and most intense period of unrest in 2017, after the West Bengal government announced Bengali as a mandatory language in state-run schools across the region. As the state cabinet held a historic meeting in Darjeeling, GJM supporters clashed with security forces, burning outposts and prompting military intervention. The violent agitation lasted 104 days, resulting in 11 protestor deaths, bomb blasts that claimed the life of a civic volunteer, and a complete shutdown

of the region’s tourist economy.

Changed political landscape

The fallout from the 2017 protests permanently altered hill politics.

State action forced Bimal Gurung underground, creating a rift that led party leaders Anit Thapa and Binay Tamang to form a breakaway faction aligned with the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC).

This development permanently split the Gorkha votes between TMC-backed local administration and BJP-aligned national candidates. In the June 2022 GTA elections, held after 10 years, Thapa’s newly formed Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha (BGPM) won 27 of 45 seats to take control of local governance, while the BJP and Gurung’s GJM boycotted the process.

However, the BJP has maintained a strong grip on parliamentary and state contests, winning the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat in 2019 and 2024, as well as securing victory across all three assembly seats (Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Kurseong) in the 2026 West Bengal Assembly elections.