

Local firms scared, BRO to build roads in Bastar Red fort

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Raipur: The Border Roads Organization (BRO) has stepped into dreaded Maoist commander Hidma's den in Bastar division to build roads that no civilian contractor dared take up. BRO is known for its expertise in building roads in treacherous, mountainous regions of Ladakh and the North-East, and Chhattisgarh is perhaps the only Maoist-affected state where it has been deployed, said an officer. BRO teams started work in a remote part of Bijapur on Monday.

In 2004-06, during a period of intense Maoist violence, BRO had constructed a 100km road between Jagdalpur and Geedam in Dantewada. It's still the best in Bastar. This time, the assignment has taken the road specialists to the most volatile hotbed of Maoist insurgency in Bastar. BRO will build two roads, from Hidma's Puwarti village to Silger, and from Tarrem to Kondapalli.

Puwarti is Hidma's native village and barely 2km from Tekulguda where 23 security personnel were killed in a Maoist ambush in April 2021. And Silger was the site of in-



BRO has already started work in Maoist commander Hidma's den

tense protests after three villagers were killed in police firing on May 17, 2021.

Local contractors were too scared to take up projects in these areas and multiple tenders got no response. According to sources, the Union home minister intervened and BRO was given the task.

Officials are not sharing details of the routes but said that Tarrem and Kondapalli road will be 18km long and the one from Silger to Puwarti is planned to be 11km. The Tarrem-Kondapalli stretch is expected to be completed by June 2025 and will cost around Rs 40 crore. "This is another step towards achieving the target of Union home minister Amit Shah's vow to eliminate Maoists by March 2026," Bastar range IGP Sundarraaj said.

Trump pledges new Canada, Mexico, China tariffs that threaten global trade

Warns Trading Partners To Stop 'Invasion' Of Illegal Migrants And Drugs Into US

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: In a warning shot that echoed across major world capitals and business majors on Tuesday, US President-elect Donald Trump said he will issue executive orders on day one of his presidency imposing new tariffs on all imported goods from China, Mexico and Canada, Washington's three largest trading partners, to stop the "invasion" of illegal migrants and drugs into the US.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump put the onus of containing illegal border crossings squarely on two immediate neighbours on its southern and northern borders, saying "both Mexico and Canada have the absolute right and power to easily solve this long simmering problem. We hereby demand that they use this power, and until such time that they do, it is time for them to pay a very big price!"

Trump's warning, coming amid reports he cited of migrant caravans winding their way across Mexico to breach the US border before his Jan 20 inauguration, proposes a 25% tariff on Mexican and Canadian goods.

In a second post, Trump took aim at Beijing for not following through on earlier promises to impose the death penalty on fentanyl producers in China, threatening an additional 10% tariff on all products from



WHAT TRUMP SAID
On Jan 20th, I will sign documents to charge Mexico and Canada a 25% tariff on all products coming into the US... will slap China with a 10% tariff, above any additional tariffs

MEXICO | President **Claudia Sheinbaum** says 'neither threats nor tariffs will solve the issue of migration or drug consumption. Imposing one tariff would mean another comes in response...'

CHINA | **Liu Pengyu**, a spokesman for Chinese embassy, warns 'no one will win a trade war, says 'China believes that China-US economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial'

CANADA | PM **Justin Trudeau** calls Trump, an official says talks were constructive. PM to meet premiers of Canada's 10 provinces this week to discuss US relations

The three countries together purchased more than \$1tn of US exports & provided \$1.5tn of goods and services to US in 2023

the country. "Representatives of China told me that they would institute their maximum penalty, that of death, for any drug dealers caught doing this but, unfortunately, they never followed through," he said, adding that the tariffs would "remain in effect until such time as Drugs, in particular Fentanyl, and all Illegal Aliens stop this Invasion of our Country!"

Trump did not name any other country, including India, from where a growing number of illegal immigrants are sneaking into the US in recent months from across the Mexican and Canadian borders after entering the continent through third countries. But the MAGA supremo's tariff threat underscores his willingness to use blunt force instruments to

achieve ends he has promised his base regardless of the nature of bilateral ties.

The so-called Trump tariffs would affect goods worth more than \$2 trillion involving the four largest trading nations in the world, with possibly catastrophic consequences for all four and beyond if the matter is not resolved quickly.

The blunt warning sent global currencies and markets into a tailspin, and had Canadian and Mexican leaders scrambling for the phone to reach the incoming administration, even as many US industry leaders and economists warned that eventually Americans too would suffer as businesses pass on the tariff overlay on to consumers and the troika of US trading majors imposed re-

taliatory tariffs.

Pundits on the liberal and moderate spectrum warned the move would lead to inflation and higher prices for the American consumer, with some arguing that Trump is trying to tank the economy before he takes over on Jan 20.

"Just a reminder: Tariffs aren't paid by other countries. A tariff is basically a sales tax, raising the price of almost everything you buy," Robert Reich, a former labour secretary in the Clinton administration, warned. One cartoon showed Trump firing a bazooka at the trading triad but the move blowing off the head of a Trump voter standing behind him.

However, some prominent Trump supporters took a more nuanced view of the tariff threat, suggesting it was a negotiating tactic aimed at achieving his pledges to American voters. "To be clear, according to Trump the 25% tariffs will not be implemented, or if implemented will be removed, once Mexico and Canada stop the flow of illegal immigrants and fentanyl into the US," argued Bill Ackman, a billionaire hedge fund manager who supports the MAGA supremo. In other words, he said in a post, Trump is "going to use tariffs as a weapon to achieve economic and political outcomes which are in the best interest of America, fulfilling his America first policy."

US correspondent for TOI

India up against aggressive bids to host Olympics 2036

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New Delhi: Is the power tussle within the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) hindering the govt's efforts to launch a strong campaign for hosting the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games?

Earlier this month, IOA informed that it has submitted a 'Letter of Intent' to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) expressing the nation's desire to host the Summer Games. It was seen as the first decisive step towards hosting the multisport event in India.

However, recent developments have indicated that India is somewhat behind in positing itself as a serious contender and lagging in its endeavour when compared to efforts mounted by other interested countries.

It's been learnt that some nations including Saudi Arabia (host city Riyadh), Qatar

(Doha), Turkey (Istanbul), Indonesia (Nusantara) and Hungary (Budapest) have already given a detailed presentation to the IOC's Future Host Commission in Lausanne, outlining their vision and capability to deliver a successful Games.

SPOTLIGHT

Among the prospective bidders, Doha has emerged the strongest, putting its hopes on bagging the hosting rights by highlighting the successful conduct of the FIFA World Cup in 2022 as its main pitch point. According to sources, during its presentation, the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) even expressed confidence of hosting the Olympics 'tomorrow' if awarded the rights with its infrastructure in place.

According to IOC's rotation rules, 2036 will be Asia's turn to host the Olympics after the Games were awarded

to Paris 2024 (Europe), Los Angeles 2028 (Americas) and Brisbane 2032 (Oceania).

India has just officially put in motion the process to progress from the stage of "informal dialogue" to "continuous dialogue" with the IOC. The next phase of the process will be "targeted dialogue", which would require the submission of an edition-specific formal bid, which would be assessed by the host commission.

A decision on the host will not be taken before IOC's elections next year but for India to be seen as a serious aspirant, the country first needs to put its National Olympic Committee (NOC) in order. IOA president P T Usha and 12 members of the Executive Council (EC) have been locked in a bitter standoff over several internal issues, most importantly the appointment of Raghuram Iyer as the NOC's CEO which is yet to be ratified by the EC.

Russia eyes India as hub for train manufacturing

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New Delhi: Russia is eager to invest in and expand the manufacturing of trains and their components in India to meet its domestic requirements, a railway ministry official said on Tuesday. Last week, Russian railway major TMH had expressed interest in this plan.

In response to a question on Russian investment in the railway sector in India, a top govt official said, "They have huge domestic requirements and for that they want to set up manufacturing facilities here. They want to get these supplies from India."

The CEO of TMH, Kirill Lipa told a group of Indian journalist at the company's headquarters in Moscow, "The current interest rate in India is very different from other countries. So,

we are interested and ready to invest in India. We are interested in developing several facilities in India, which are capable of providing certain components and we think some of them can be supplied to the Russian market as well."

Mentioning that Russia currently has several supply contracts from India, Lipa said, "We have a historically good ties with suppliers there (India) and that means we can increase this import into Russia from India."

TMH is the major stakeholder in Kinet Railway Solutions, which has signed approximately Rs 55,000 crore contract with Indian Railways to produce 1,920 Vande Bharat sleeper coaches and maintain them for 35 years. Lipa said they are "not looking at getting any supply from Russia" for Vande Bharat project.

The COP Cop Out That Should Surprise No One

Baku conference has shown up the glaring inadequacy of the international climate framework and the deep mistrust among nations. Bad news for the fight against climate change

Chandra Bhushan



Mahatma Gandhi's famous critique of the Cripps Mission in 1942 – describing its proposal as “a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank” – perfectly captures the essence of the climate finance deal adopted at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

However, there is one crucial difference: while Cripps's figurative cheque was rejected, the Baku finance deal, despite criticism from several nations, including India, was adopted. This highlights the broader failures of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and global efforts to address the climate crisis.

The Baku conference began with developing countries demanding \$1.3tn in annual funding from developed nations by 2030 to tackle the climate emergency. Their proposal sought at least \$500bn in public funding, with the remainder provided as concessional private finance.

Yet, after two weeks of contentious negotiations, developed countries committed to only \$300bn annually by 2035, with no binding pledge for public funding. Instead, the deal vaguely promises to source funds from “a wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources.”

Worse still, the agreement permits developed countries to include climate-related loans from multilateral development banks, such as World Bank, as part of the funding pool. This means developed nations are under no obligation to increase funding beyond the current \$100bn annually until 2035. Moreover, they retain the freedom to count virtually any climate-related financial flow to developing countries as part of their contributions.

The political future of this deal is equally uncertain, as there is little chance that the incoming Trump administration will honour the commitments made by the Biden administration.

In essence, the Baku deal offers little more than a continuation of status quo, allowing developed nations

to sidestep meaningful financial obligations while leaving developing countries to shoulder the escalating costs of the climate crisis.

However, this is not surprising. In 2009, developed countries pledged \$100bn annually in climate finance by 2020. They met this target only in 2022, and even then, nearly 70% of the funds were provided as loans at market rates, burdening developing nations with debt.

Expecting trillions from nations that struggled to deliver billions was always unrealistic. So, how should developing countries secure meaningful climate finance?

The path forward requires fundamental reforms in

countries by 117 basis points. This translates to an additional \$40bn in interest payments over 10 years on gov't debt in these countries alone. The report predicts that this financial burden will double over the next decade. In effect, the current financial system is profiting from developing countries' climate vulnerability.

To address this injustice, several proposals, including those advanced during India's G20 presidency, have been on the agenda for years. These include measures like debt crisis management, multilateral development bank reforms, risk mitigation programmes, and blended finance strategies. Implementing these reforms would enable developing countries to invest more in mitigation and adaptation using their own resources.

Reforms within UNFCCC are equally urgent. At Baku, India accused the COP presidency and UNFCCC secretariat of manipulation to secure adoption of the finance deal, reflecting a deep trust deficit in the institution. Additionally, the growing influence of the fossil fuel industry in UNFCCC proceedings threatens its credibility and relevance.

The reality is that under the Paris Agreement, all countries are now on their own to mitigate, adapt and pay for costs of climate impacts. UNFCCC is now simply a platform to collect, synthesise and disseminate information. It doesn't have the tools to drive global collective action to combat climate change. So, persisting with UNFCCC in its present form is counterproductive.

There are many ideas on the table, including making UNFCCC a smaller solution-driven forum where countries report their progress and are held accountable to their pledges. Other suggestions include establishing multiple sectoral and regional platforms, such as on energy, transportation, agriculture, industry etc rather than relying on a single global framework.

The Baku conference has laid bare glaring weaknesses in the international climate framework. It is now up to Brazil, COP30 host, to restore trust and drive meaningful progress. Without decisive reforms, the global fight against climate change risks being mired in inadequacy and inaction, with all the attendant hazards for life on earth.

The writer is an environmentalist



the global financial system to empower developing countries to deal with the climate crisis and revamping UNFCCC to enable effective international collaboration.

The current global financial system is stacked against vulnerable nations. Poor African countries, for instance, pay interest rates on loans that are four times higher than those paid by US and up to eight times higher than by wealthy European countries. This disparity is being exacerbated by the climate crisis.

A report by the UN Environment Programme, *Climate Change and the Cost of Capital in Developing Countries*, found that climate vulnerability has already increased the average cost of debt in 25 vulnerable developing

India-B'desh tensions mount as Hindu priest jailed for 'sedition'

Protect Minorities, Says MEA; It's Our Internal Affair, Retorts Dhaka

Ahsan Tasnim

Dhaka: The govts of India and Bangladesh sparred Tuesday after communal tensions flared in Chittagong following a court's denial of bail to Iskcon priest **Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari**, who has emerged as a powerful voice against targeted attacks on Hindus and other minorities since the Aug 5 regime change in Bangladesh.

The court's order against the priest charged with sedition triggered violent clashes between supporters of the monk and law enforcement forces who were joined by lo-

LAWYER DIES AS VIOLENCE ERUPTS OUTSIDE COURT

Photo: AFP

➤ An Iskcon priest and spokesperson of a 'sanatan' group, monk has been raising his voice against targeted attacks on minorities in B'desh

➤ Arrested from Dhaka airport after a sedition case filed against him over alleged disrespect to B'desh national flag

➤ Supporters protest after he's denied bail. Obstruct his prison van. Clashes break out outside court. Lawyer killed in violence



Police on Tuesday lathicharged supporters of Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari after a court in Chittagong denied him bail

cal, leaving at least one dead and many others injured. Eyewitnesses identified the victim as Saiful Islam Alif (35), a lawyer, alleging that he was hacked to death by protesters. Police confirmed receiving reports of the killing but emphasised that the situation remained under control.

The court verdict could

worsen New Delhi's relations with Dhaka, which have been going downhill since the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina govt. India noted with "deep concern" the arrest and denial of bail to the priest and urged Bangladeshi authorities to ensure safety and security of Hindus and all minorities.

Bangladesh hit back later

in the evening calling the issue an "internal affair". Its ministry of foreign affairs said such "unfounded" statements not only misrepresent facts but also "stand contrary to the spirit of friendship and understanding between the two neighbouring countries".

► Reports on P 7 & 22