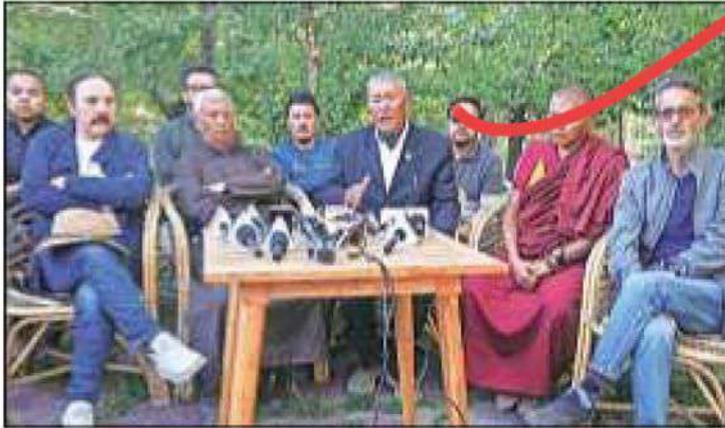


No talks till normalcy restored in Ladakh, says Leh Apex Body



Leh Apex Body (LAB) co-chairman Chering Dorjay (centre) with other members addresses a press conference in Leh on Monday. (R) Mortal remains of 46-year-old ex-Serviceman Tsewang Tharchin, a Kargil War veteran, who was killed in violence during recent protests for Ladakh statehood, being taken for his last rites amid curfew, in Leh. (PTI)

LEH, Sept 29 (PTI)

HARDENING its stand following the killing of four protesters during clashes with security forces last week, the Leh Apex Body (LAB) on Monday announced that it will stay away from talks with the High Powered Committee of the Home Ministry till normalcy is restored in Ladakh and a conducive atmosphere is created.

LAB Chairman Thupstan Chhewang made the announce-

ment shortly after the fourth victim of the violence -- a former Army soldier -- was cremated amid tight security in curfew-bound Leh. The curfew, imposed last Wednesday, was relaxed for two hours at 4 PM in the entire town. There was no untoward incident reported from anywhere, officials said.

"We have unanimously agreed that the situation that is prevailing in Ladakh, keeping that in view, as long as peace is not

restored and a conducive atmosphere is not created, we will not participate in any talks," Chhewang, a former two-time Member of Parliament, said at a press conference here. "We will urge the Home Ministry, UT administration, and the administration to take steps to address the atmosphere of fear, grief and anger that is there," he said. Violent protests occurred on September 24. Four people were killed and scores of others were injured.

India inks pact to construct first-ever rail links with Bhutan

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New Delhi: India and Bhutan signed an agreement Monday for construction of two cross-border railway lines, aimed at strengthening economic and people-to-people links between the two neighbouring nations. The two projects, with a combined length of 89km and connecting Bhutanese cities of Samtse and Gelephu, will be fully funded by India at a cost of Rs 4,033 crore.

These will be the first-ever rail links for Bhutan. Kokrajhar (Assam)-Gelephu and Banarhat (West Bengal)-Samtse lines will connect Bhutan to the Indian railways network. Kokrajhar-Gelephu corridor, which will also serve Bhutan's upcoming "Mindfulness City", is expected to be completed in four years. Banarhat-Samtse line, connecting to Bhutan's industrial hub, is slated for completion in three years.

Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said both lines will carry passengers and freight and will be designed to accommodate modern trains,

BRIDGING GAP BETWEEN 2 NATIONS

Project

Banarhat (West Bengal) to Samtse (Bhutan)

Cost | ₹577cr

Completion period | 3 yrs

Project

Kokrajhar (Assam) to Gelephu (Bhutan)

Cost | ₹3,456cr

Completion period | 4 yrs



including Vande Bharat.

In response to a question on whether these projects should be viewed as a countermeasure to China building rail links close to borders, foreign secretary Vikram Misri said, "When it comes to the border, specifically areas through which these railway lines will pass, there is no involvement of any third country. So, this question is a bit superfluous

at this point in time."

While 2.4km of 69km of Kokrajhar-Gelephu line will be on Bhutanese side, 2.1km of the 20km Banarhat-Samtse corridor will fall in Bhutan. Referring to PM Modi's visit to Thimphu last year where both sides had agreed to the proposal of having rail links, Vaishnaw said, "This is one of the promises we had made, and we are delivering on it."

Indian aid for Palestine close to record \$80m in last 11 years: Govt

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India's developmental assistance of close to \$80 million for Palestine in the past 11 years is almost double that of the amount that was given in the preceding 65 years, according to Indian authorities. India has continued to extend humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine both bilaterally and through UNRWA, despite the ban imposed on the agency by Israel. It contributes annually \$5 million to UNRWA and has provided \$27.5 million to the agency since 2020-21.

"India's developmental assistance, given to Palestine since 2014 is almost double of what was given in the preceding 65 years (around \$42 million) and projects worth \$40 million are in the pipeline," said a diplomatic source

While govt has faced some criticism for its flip-flop over the Gaza issue, like its decision in June this year to abstain from voting on a UNGA resolution for lasting and unconditional ceasefire, it believes India's overall position, including its long-standing commitment to a 2-state solution, has remain unchanged.

Indian authorities also see as significant that the govt hasn't voted against any of the 175 resolutions on Israel-Palestine issues in the UN during past 10 years, suggesting India's voting pattern at UN



India has faced criticism for its flip-flop over the Gaza issue, like its decision to abstain from voting on a UNGA resolution for unconditional truce

has remained unchanged. India was among the 142 countries that voted recently in favour of a UNGA resolution endorsing the New York Declaration that outlined tangible, irreversible and timebound steps for a 2-state solution.

Since the Gaza conflict erupted in 2023, India has had to do a tough balancing act between its increasingly important relationship with Israel and its traditional support for the Palestinian cause. It has strongly condemned the Oct 7, 2023, terrorist strikes by Hamas, defending Israel's right to defend itself from acts of terrorism, but equally condemned the loss of civilian lives in the Israel-Hamas war and sought respect for international humanitarian law.

While the recent visit by Israeli hardliner Bezalel Smotrich raised eyebrows, govt sees it as a visit purely in his capacity as Israel's finance

minister to sign a bilateral investment agreement. The deal was under discussion for the past six years, before it was finalised last month. According to Indian authorities, the visit was meant to ramp up India's economic and financial ties with Israel.

"India remains concerned at the security situation and has called for a ceasefire, release of all hostages and peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. At the same time, India has emphasized the need for safe, timely and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine," said a source, citing Palestinian ambassador Abdullah Shawesh's recent remark that he is satisfied with India's position. India has also been calling for efforts to bring Israel and Palestine closer for early resumption of direct peace negotiations.

Trump meets Bibi for pivotal talks on Gaza peace proposal

Netanyahu Apologises To Qatari PM For Strike On Doha

Washington: President Trump was hosting Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday for critical talks aimed at ending the war in Gaza and developing a US plan on post-war governance in the war-battered Palestinian territory.

Netanyahu on Monday apologized to Qatar PM Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani for a military strike targeting Hamas officials in the emirate that infuriated Arab leaders and triggered rare condemnation by the US of Israel, according to two people, including a diplomatic official, familiar with the matter.

Netanyahu called al Thani to extend the apology during his White House meeting on Monday with President Donald Trump. The people familiar spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

The White House talks between Netanyahu and Trump come at a tenuous moment. Israel is increasingly isolated, losing support from many countries that were long its steadfast allies. At home, Netanyahu's governing coalition appears more fragile than ever. And the White House is showing signs of impatience.



Trump welcomes Netanyahu to the White House on Monday

The question now is whether Trump, who has offered steadfast backing to Netanyahu throughout the war, will change his tone and turn up the pressure on Israel to wind down the conflict.

As he welcomed Netanyahu to the White House, Trump responded affirmatively when asked by reporters whether he was confident a deal would be soon reached to end the fighting between Israel and Hamas. "I am. I'm very confident," Trump said.

Earlier, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt urged both sides to finalise an agreement to bring an end to the nearly two-year old war in Gaza. "Ultimately the president knows when you get to a good deal, both sides are going

to leave a little bit unhappy," Leavitt told reporters. "But we need this conflict to end."

Trump and Netanyahu are first holding talks with aides in the Oval Office and over a private lunch. A joint press conference is expected later.

Meanwhile, Riyadh Mansour, the Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations, said Palestinian officials stood ready to work with Trump and Arab countries in bringing an end to the war. "Let us not delay a single minute more in doing what is necessary for this just peace to replace the unbearable reality of today," Mansour said during a Security Council meeting on the Middle East.

Trump joined forces with Netanyahu during Israel's brief war with Iran in June, ordering US stealth bombers to strike three nuclear sites, and he supported the Israeli PM during his corruption trial, describing the case as a "witch hunt." But the relationship has become more tense lately. Trump was frustrated by Israel's failed strike this month on Hamas officials in Qatar, a U.S. ally in the region that had been hosting negotiations to end the war in Gaza. AP

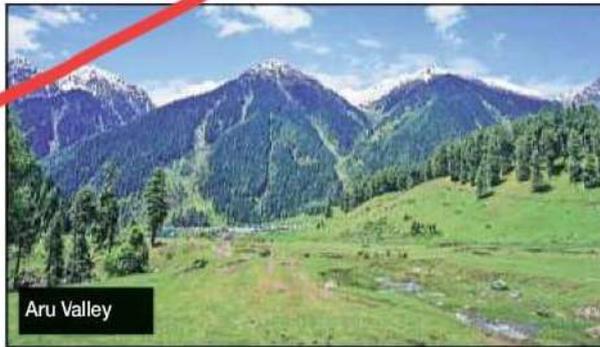
7 tourists spots, closed after Pahalgam attack, reopened

SRINAGAR, Sept 29 (PTI)

THE Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday threw open seven tourist spots in the Valley that were closed in the wake of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

The tourist spots were opened following directions issued by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha after a meeting of the Unified Headquarters on Friday.

"After a thorough security



review and discussion in today's UHQ meeting, I've ordered reopening of more tourist spots in Kashmir and Jammu Divisions, which were temporarily closed as precautionary measures," Sinha said in a post on X on Friday.

The LG administration shut down nearly 50 tourist spots following the terror attack at Baisaran in the Pahalgam area on April 22, in which heavily-armed terrorists shot dead 26 people -- mostly tourists.

The seven tourist spots that were reopened in the Kashmir division include Aru Valley, Rafting Point Yanner, Akkad Park, Padshahi Park and Kaman Post.

The LG had ordered the reopening of five tourist spots in the Jammu division as well.

These include Dagan Top in Ramban, Dhaggar in Kathua and Shiv Cave in Salal, Reasi.

The LG administration had reopened 16 tourist destinations, including some parts of Pahalgam, in June.

Warfare now measured in hours and seconds, not months: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, Sept 29 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said that warfare is now “measured in hours and seconds, not months”, with satellites, drones and sensors redefining the nature of conflict, as he urged the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) to develop a futuristic roadmap that anticipates new challenges, integrates cutting-edge technologies and continuously adapts strategies.

In his address at the 42nd ICG Commanders’ Conference held at the force’s headquarters here, Singh also underlined that cyber and electronic warfare are “no longer hypothetical threats”, but present-day realities.

“A nation may attempt to paral-



Rajnath Singh during a meeting with the Indian Coast Guard commanders at Coast Guard headquarters, in New Delhi. (PTI)

yse our systems not with missiles, but through hacking, cyber-attacks and electronic jamming. The ICG must continuously

adapt, upgrade its training and equipment to guard against such threats. Automated surveillance networks and AI-enabled sys-

tems are essential to reduce response times to seconds and ensure readiness at all times,” he said.

The Defence Minister said warfare is now “measured in hours and seconds, not months, with satellites, drones and sensors redefining the nature of conflict”.

Singh underlined that India’s 7,500-km coastline, along with island territories such as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep, poses “enormous challenges”, requiring advanced technology, well-trained personnel and round-the-clock surveillance.

He emphasised that maritime threats are becoming increasingly technology-driven and multi-dimensional.

Major protests against Pak Govt in PoK, 1 killed

Widespread demonstrations were reported from Plandri, Dadyal, Bhimber, Kotli district. Telecommunications across PoK has been completely shut down, with cellular networks, landlines, and DSL Internet services suspended.



MUZAFFARABAD, Sept 29 (ANI)

MASSIVE protests have broken out in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) against the Government of Anwar Ul Haq Kakar and the Pakistan leadership, as demonstrators demand basic rights. According to local media reports, at least one person has been killed and several others injured.

Pictures from PoJK showed huge

crowds rallying in different areas, raising slogans against what they described as the denial of their rights.

The scale of the gatherings reflected growing anger across multiple districts.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) unit in PoJK

amplified these protests online, issuing a series of statements accusing the Anwar-led Government of “incompetence and repression” as

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