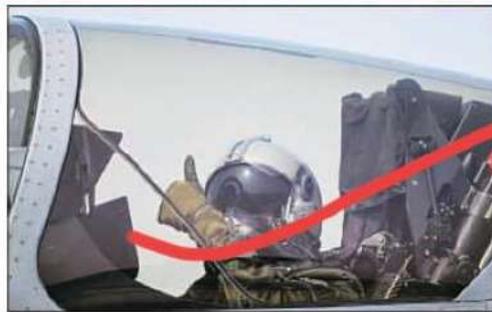


President takes sortie in Rafale

It's an unforgettable experience, says Murmu after sortie



Murmu is the first President of India to have taken a sortie in two fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force. The sortie lasted for approximately 30 minutes, covering about 200 kilometres.

(L) President Droupadi Murmu poses for pictures (R) flashing a thumbs-up gesture from inside the jet before she takes a sortie in Rafale fighter jet, at Air Force Station in Haryana's Ambala. (PTI)

AMBALA, Oct 29 (PTI)

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday took a sortie in a Rafale fighter jet from the Indian Air Force Station in Ambala, and described the experience as "unforgettable", one that instilled a "renewed sense of pride" in India's defence capabilities.

Murmu made history as she became the first President of

India to fly in two different fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF). Previously, she undertook a sortie in a Sukhoi 30 MKI in April 2023 from Tezpur in Assam. Donning a G-suit and sporting sunglasses, Murmu, who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Armed Forces, was seen posing for pictures and flashing a thumbs-up gesture before the French-made jet, flown by Group Captain Amit

Gehani, Commanding Officer of the 17 Squadron, took off at 11:27 am.

The sortie lasted for approximately 30 minutes, covering about 200 kilometres. The aircraft reached a height of about 15,000 feet above sea level and a speed of approximately 700 kilometres per hour, according to a statement from the President's office.

(Contd on page 5)

Murmu poses with Rafale's first woman pilot Shivangi Singh

AMBALA, Oct 29 (PTI)

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu, who undertook a half-an-hour sortie in a Rafale fighter jet on Wednesday from here, posed with Squadron leader Shivangi Singh, just before she took to the skies.

Singh, the country's first woman Rafale fighter jet pilot, was claimed to have been captured during 'Operation Sindoor' by a pro-Pakistan social media handle.

The Press Information Bureau (PIB) Fact Check had on May 10 called out this claim as fake.

The Rafale jets were used in Operation Sindoor, which was launched on May 7 to destroy several terror infrastructures in territories controlled by Pakistan, in response to the April 22 dastardly terrorist attack in Pahalgam.

The strikes triggered four days of intense clashes that ended with an understanding on stopping the military actions on May 10. The Rashtrapati Bhavan issued a picture of the President posing with Singh, atop a ladder used in boarding or deboarding an aircraft.



3 killed in Andhra Pradesh as cyclone **Montha** wreaks havoc

AMARAVATI, Oct 29 (IANS)

CYCLONE Montha, which crossed the Andhra Pradesh coast past midnight on Tuesday, left three persons dead, damaged standing crops over 1.50 lakh acres and disrupted power and transportation. The Government said the loss was minimised due to the precautionary measures put in place.

Neighbouring Telangana also received heavy rains.

During a review meeting on the cyclone at the Real Time
(Contd on page 5)



Debris strewn on the shore as people venture into the sea in the aftermath of cyclone 'Montha' in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday.

(PTI)

India, China hold military talks on eastern Ladakh situation

NEW DELHI, Oct 29 (PTI)

THE Indian and Chinese militaries held a fresh round of high-level military talks focusing on maintaining peace and security along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

The Chinese Defence Ministry stated this on Wednesday.

It said the 23rd round of Corps Commander-level talks were held on the Moldo-Chushul border meeting point on the Indian side of the frontier on October 25.

“The two sides engaged in active and in-depth communication on the management of the western section of the China-India border,” it said in a readout.

There is no official word from Indian officials on the meeting. The Chinese Defence Ministry said the two sides decided to maintain communication and dialogue as decided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

“They agreed to continue communication and dialogue through military and diplomatic channels under the guidance of the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, and jointly safeguard peace and tranquillity in the China-India border areas,” it said.

India rejects 'biased' UN report on Rohingya refugees

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 29 (IANS)

INDIA has strongly denounced as biased and communal a human rights report on Myanmar that claims the Pahalgam terrorist massacre in April affected the treatment of Rohingya migrants.

"I strongly denounce the biased approach adopted by the SR [special rapporteur] of the innocent civilian victims of the April 2025 terrorist attack in Pahalgam through biased communal lens", BJP MP Dilip Saikia said on Tuesday.

"The allegation that this terrorist attack impacted displaced persons from Myanmar has absolutely no factual bearing", Saikia told a briefing on human rights in Myanmar.



Human rights report on Myanmar claims that the Pahalgam massacre in April affected the treatment of Rohingya migrants

He was reacting to the allegations made against India by the special rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar, Thomas Andrews, a US Democrat politician-turned-Harvard academic. "My country rejects such prejudiced and blinkered 'analysis' by the special rapporteur", said Saikia. He is one of the MPs joining India's delegation to the General Assembly.

Referring to the Rohingyas in India, he said, "My country is seeing an alarming level of radicalisation among the displaced persons leading to consequential pressure and impact on the law and order situation".

The Rohingya organisation behind the crisis in Myanmar is the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) led by Ataullah abu

Ammar Bannuni, a Karachi-born Rohingya.

In August 2017, ARSA launched communal attacks on Hindus in Myanmar, killing 99 of them -- women, men, and children -- and abducting several, according to Amnesty International.

Regarding India's approach to its neighbour, Saikia said India is for an immediate cessation of violence, release of political prisoners, unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, and inclusive political dialogue.

"We firmly believe that sustainable peace can only be secured through inclusive political dialogue and the early restoration of democratic processes through credible and participatory elections", he added.

Hurricane Melissa makes landfall in Cuba

SANTIAGO DE CUBA, Oct 29 (AP)

HURRICANE Melissa made landfall in eastern Cuba near the city of Chivirico early Wednesday as a Category 3 storm after pummeling Jamaica as one of the strongest Atlantic hurricanes on record, the US National Hurricane Center said.

Hundreds of thousands of people had been evacuated to shelters in Cuba. A hurricane warning was in effect for the provinces of Granma, Santiago de Cuba, Guantanamo, Holguin and Las Tunas. Early on Wednesday, Melissa had top sustained winds of 120 mph (193 kph) and was moving northeast at 10 mph (16 kph) according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami. The hurricane was centred 32 km east of Chivirico and about 97 km west-southwest of Guantanamo, Cuba. Melissa was forecast to cross the island through the morning and move into the Bahamas later Wednesday. The continuing intense rain could cause life-threatening flooding with numerous landslides, US forecasters said. A hurricane watch was in effect for Bermuda.

Melissa struck Jamaica on Tuesday with top sustained winds of 185 mph (295 kph).

The storm was expected to generate a storm surge of up to 12 feet in the region and drop up to 20 inches of rain in parts of eastern Cuba. "Numerous landslides are likely in those areas," said Michael Brennan, director of the US National Hurricane Centre in Miami.

10 killed as deadly floods batter Vietnam

HANOI, Oct 29 (AP)

FLOODWATERS swept through central Vietnam this week after record-breaking rains, leaving at least 10 people dead and five missing, officials said, as cities, farmland and transport networks were battered by the onslaught.

Six deaths and four missing people were reported in the coastal city of Danang, where 19 others were injured and homes, crops and thousands of livestock were washed away, according to local authorities. The city is seen as a future growth engine for Vietnam, heightening concern over the damage.

In Hue, the former imperial capital, one person drowned and a 5-year-old girl was reported missing after falling into floodwaters, state media said. Much of the city remains underwater, with rivers overflowing after rainfall reached 42 inches in 24 hours by late Monday, the highest amount ever recorded in Vietnam, according to the national weather agency.

At least three people died in Quang Ngai province, which recorded more than 120 landslides along major highways. Some routes remain blocked, trapping 50 people in 37 vehicles for three days.

Peace talks with Afghan Taliban failed: Pakistan

■ The four-day talks began on Saturday and were facilitated by the host Turkey

ISLAMABAD, Oct 29 (PTI)

PAKISTAN authorities on Wednesday confirmed that talks with the Afghan Taliban to tackle cross-border terrorism failed, saying Kabul backtracked on commitments to control militancy.

The Four-day talks began on Saturday and were facilitated by the host, Turkiye, where officials from Pakistan and Afghanistan attempted to find a common ground but failed to reach a consensus.

Pakistan's Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar, confirmed the peace talks ended without a breakthrough. "The dialogue thus failed to bring about any

workable solution," Tarar said in a post on social media.

He said Pakistan had long sought cooperation from Kabul against militants targeting the country.

Tarar said, ever since the assumption of control in Kabul,



Pakistan has repeatedly engaged with the Afghan Taliban Regime regarding persistent cross-border terrorism.

Tarar added that Islamabad had asked the Taliban regime "time and again to fulfil their written commitments to Pakistan and to the international community in the Doha Agreement."

However, he said, "Pakistan's fervent efforts proved futile due to the Afghan Taliban Regime's unabated support to anti-Pakistan terrorists."

"The Taliban regime bears no responsibility towards the people of Afghanistan and thrives on a war economy," he said, adding that it "desires to drag and mire the Afghan people into a need-less war."

"Pakistan has always desired, advocated and immensely sacrificed for peace and prosperity for the people of Afghanistan," Tarar said.

He said Pakistan has held countless rounds of talks and parleys with the Afghan Taliban Regime, but unfortunately, they have always remained indifferent to Pakistan's losses.

He thanked Qatar, Turkiye, and other friendly nations "for their support and sincere efforts to bring about a peaceful solution to the problem of terrorism."

Early conclusion of India-EU FTA can make big difference: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, Oct 29 (PTI)

AN EARLY conclusion of the proposed free trade agreement between India and the European Union can make a "big difference" in terms of stabilising the global economy and strengthening democratic forces, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday.

He said this after meeting a high-powered trade delegation from the 27-nation bloc.

The seven-member delegation is in India to push for finalisation of the long-awaited bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) between the two sides.

"Discussed how India & the European Union can maximize convergences and deepen cooperation. This can stabilize the global economy and strengthen democratic forces," Jaishankar said on X.

"The early conclusion of the India-EU FTA can make a big difference to these objectives," he



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a meeting with delegation of European Parliament's Committee on International Trade, in New Delhi.

(PTI)

said. Jaishankar remarks came as the two sides looked to wrap up

negotiations for the mega trade pact. In September, Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen reaffirmed their

commitment to finalise the trade deal by December.

The European Union is India's biggest trade partner with bilateral trade in goods recording USD 135 billion in the financial year 2023-24. The FTA is expected to significantly enhance the two-way trade ties.

India and the EU concluded the 14th round of FTA negotiations in Brussels on October 10.

Following the negotiations, the EU said the talks focused on firming up an economically meaningful market access package.

"Some progress was made in outstanding areas, in particular on the SPS chapter, which was closed," it said.

The two sides have already concluded negotiations on 11 chapters that included customs and trade facilitation, dispute settlement, digital trade, sustainable food system, small and medium-sized enterprises, competition and subsidies and capital movements.