

# Govt kick-starts mega AMCA stealth fighter jet programme

NEW DELHI, May 27 (PTI)

THE defence ministry has kick-started the selection process for a private sector partner to build a next-generation fighter jet under the ambitious Advanced Multirole Combat Aircraft (AMCA) project, widely considered as the nation's biggest indigenous aerospace programme.

It is learnt that the Government issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) or tender to Tata Advanced Systems, Larsen and Toubro and Bharat Forge as part of the selection process.

While Larsen and Toubro has partnered with Bharat Electronics Limited, Bharat Forge has reached an understanding with BEML.

Interestingly, state-run aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) has been kept out of the process, sources

said. India has been focusing on the ambitious AMCA project to develop the medium-weight deep penetration fighter jet with advanced stealth features to bolster its air power capability.

AMCA, along with the Tejas light combat aircraft, is planned to be the mainstay of the Indian Air Force.

After the three companies submit their responses to the RFP, the selection process for the project is likely to be completed in four to five months.

The selected private defence major will work with the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), an entity that operates under the defence ministry, for developing the prototypes of the aircraft.

Under the project, the Government plans to build five prototypes of the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

The IAF has been pushing for the AMCA project in view of its long-term requirement.

India's confidence in the development of the AMCA saw a significant jump after the development of the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas.

Manufactured by state-run aerospace behemoth HAL, the Tejas aircraft is a potent platform for air combat and offensive air support missions, while reconnaissance and anti-ship operations are its secondary roles.

The IAF is also in the process of procuring 114 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA).

In April 2019, the IAF issued an RFI (Request for Information), or initial tender, to acquire 114 jets at a cost of around USD 18 billion.

It was billed as one of the world's biggest military procurement programmes in recent years.

# India's first indigenous super-pressure balloon launched

NEW DELHI, May 27 (PTI)

RED Balloon Aerospace on Wednesday launched the country's first indigenous super-pressure balloon (SPB) carrying commercial payloads from seven national and international partners.

SPBs are high-altitude balloons designed to maintain internal pressure higher than the surrounding atmospheric pressure, enabling them to carry payloads for extended periods.

Launched from the Indira Gandhi Stadium in Vijayawada, the SPB -- named VISTA -- ascended to an altitude of about 25 km.

Speaking to PTI, CVS Kiran, co-



founder and CEO of Red Balloon Aerospace, said, "The mission was launched to prove super-pressure balloon capability, which has never been done in India before. This involves proving the balloon's design and the

material."

While the balloon launched on Wednesday is expected to stay in the sky for 24 hours, the company ultimately aims to develop SPBs capable of staying aloft for months.

The mission is significant as SPBs offer several advantages over satellites. For instance, SPBs are much cheaper and are capable of doing all the tasks that a satellite does. Sireesh Pallikonda, co-founder and COO of Red Balloon Aerospace, told PTI, "LEO satellites are at 500 km, and GEO satellites are at 36,000 km, while near space platforms (like SPBs) are at 20 km. Being 1,800 times closer to Earth than a geostationary satellite allows for higher resolution and faster data rates."

# India warns Pakistan of 'consequences' for cross-border terror at UNSC meet

■ By Yoshita Singh

UNITED NATIONS, May 27 (PTI)

PAKISTAN will have to accept that there are “consequences” to its sponsorship of cross-border terrorism, India told a UN meeting, underscoring that it has “everyright” to defend itself from such terror attacks perpetrated by its neighbour.

“I am compelled to respond to baseless and unwarranted remarks made by Pakistan today. India would like to set the facts straight,” India’s Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni said at a UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday. “Independent India began its life battling with cross-border aggression by Pakistan, which coveted Indian territories that had become a part of India as a result of their complete, legal



Harish Parvathaneni

and irrevocable accession,” Parvathaneni said.

Parvathaneni’s strong response against Pakistan came during the Security Council debate on ‘Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and strengthening the UN-centred international system’, chaired by China, under its presidency of the 15-nation UN body for the month of May.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi presided over the opening session of the debate.

Addressing the UNSC debate,

Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar had raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and also referred to the Indus Waters Treaty, which India put in abeyance in the wake of the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 civilians were killed. The Resistance Front (TRF), a front for Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), had claimed responsibility for the attack. Slamming Pakistan, Parvathaneni said the “use of cross-border terrorism by Pakistan and its doctrine of ‘bleeding India by a thousand cuts’ exposes its hollow rhetoric and the rhetoric of commitment to the UN Charter”.

“India has everyright to defend itself from such cross-border terrorism. Pakistan will have to accept that there are consequences to its sponsorship of cross-border terrorism,” he said.

# Israel kills new Hamas military leader in Gaza

■ By Wafaa Shurafa and Melanie Lidman  
DEIR AL-BALAH, May 27 (AP)

ISRAEL said on Wednesday that it targeted and killed the new leader of Hamas' military wing during airstrikes in Gaza City less than two weeks after it killed his predecessor. Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz and the Israeli military said the strikes, which were carried out on Tuesday, killed Mohammed Odeh.

Family members of a man called Mohammed Odeh said he was killed in the strike, but did not confirm he was the leader of the military wing. Hamas has not commented. Katz called him "one of the architects" of the October 7, 2023, attacks that triggered over two years of war in Gaza and said it was the fourth time Israel has killed the head of Hamas' military wing since that massacre. Izz al-Din al-Haddad, the previous head, was killed on May 16. At least three people were killed and 12 injured in Tuesday's strike, which took place



Mohammed Odeh

on the eve of Eid al-Adha, a major Muslim holiday.

"We pledged to eliminate everyone who led the October 7 massacre and this is what we will do: they are all bound to die, everywhere," Katz wrote on X on Wednesday. "We pledged that Hamas will not hold civilian or military rule." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is preparing for elections in the fall, also threatened that Israel will target everyone involved in the



Palestinians offer Eid al-Adha prayers beside the ruins of a mosque destroyed by Israeli bombardment, in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday. (AP/PTI)

October 7, 2023, attack. The attack came as Muslims prepared for Eid al-Adha, normally a joyous time of family gatherings and large meals.

The holiday once again is subdued this year in Gaza, where the vast majority of people remain displaced and live in tents or

temporary shelters after a devastating war.

Around 90 per cent of Gaza's more than 2 million people have lost their homes, according to UN estimates, with most of them now sheltering in huge tent camps with rat infestations and pools of sewage. They are

dependent on aid to survive.

A ceasefire reached between Israel and Hamas last October remains fragile. Israeli attacks have killed more than 880 Palestinians since the ceasefire took effect. Israel says its attacks are in response to violations by Hamas or threats to its soldiers, but Palestinian health officials says scores of civilians have been among the dead. Four Israeli soldiers have also been killed during this period in Gaza.

Israel launched its offensive in Gaza in response to the Hamas attacks in October 2023, which killed some 1,200 people and took 251 others hostage.

The Palestinian Health

Ministry in Gaza says over 72,700 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire. The ministry, part of Gaza's Hamas government, does not give a breakdown of civilian and militant deaths.

Israel's military clashed with the Iran-backed militant Hezbollah group on Tuesday along a strategic river in southern Lebanon as Israeli troops pushed farther north, days ahead of talks in Washington between Lebanese and Israeli delegations.

The Litani river has been a de-facto boundary in Lebanon, with large areas to the south under Israeli military control despite the ceasefire that has been in place for over a month.

## Pak as mediator problematic: Graham

■ By Sagar Kulkarni  
WASHINGTON, May 27 (PTI)

REPUBLICAN Senator Lindsey Graham termed "problematic" the role of Pakistan as a mediator in the United States' war with

Iran. Graham's remarks came as Pakistan's Defence Minister Khwaja Asif said he is not in favour of Islamabad joining the Abraham



# Southwest monsoon further advances in Arabian Sea: IMD

NEW DELHI, May 27 (PTI)

THE monsoon has missed its expected onset date of May 26 in Keralam but has further advanced into some more parts of the southwest and southeast Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep area and Bay of Bengal, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday.

The IMD had earlier estimated that the monsoon would arrive in Keralam on May 26 with a model error of  $\pm 4$  days.

The monsoon usually sets over Keralam around June 1, marking the beginning of the monsoon season (June to September) in the country.

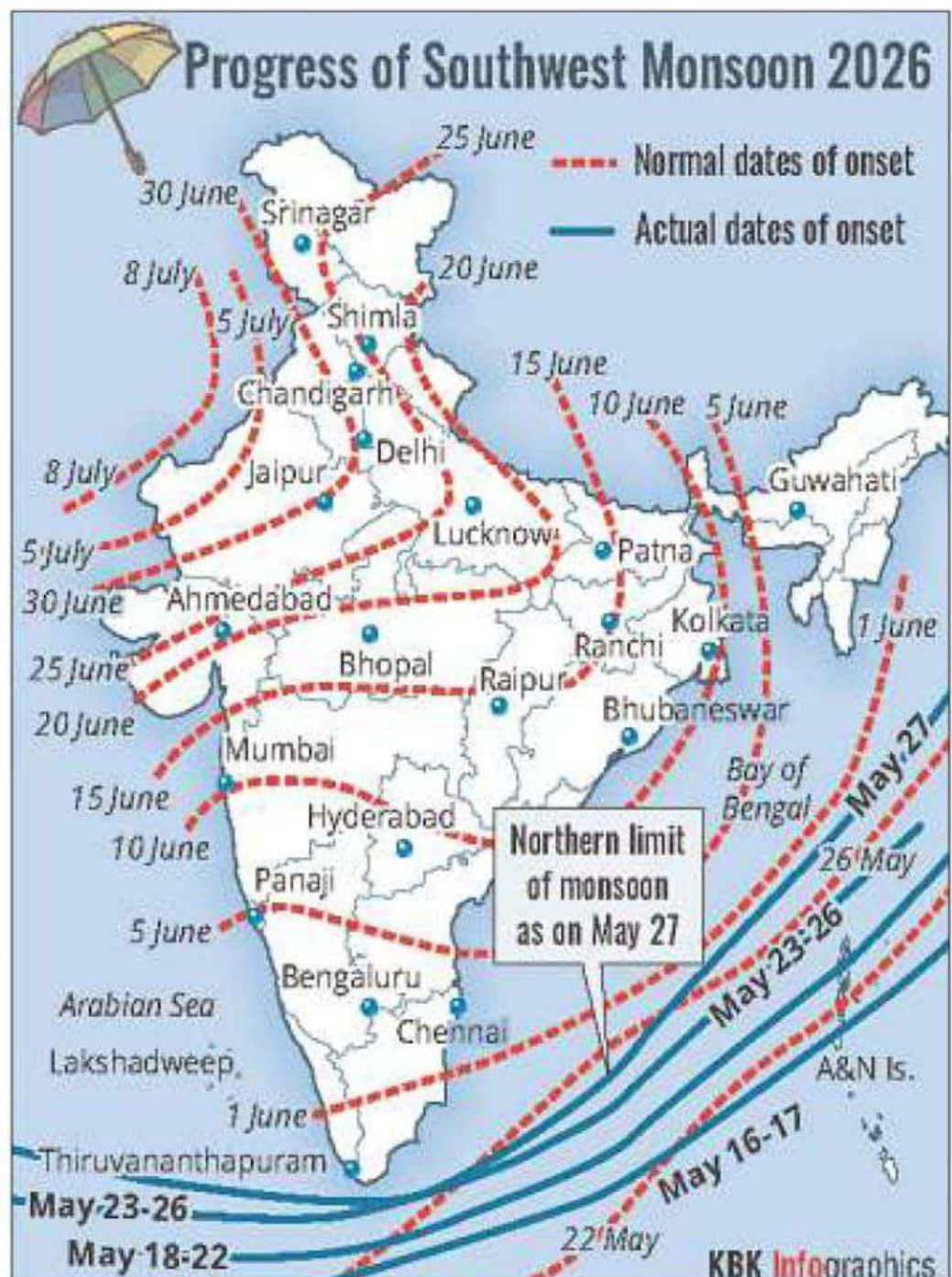
Last year, the onset of monsoon happened on May 24, according to the department.

In a statement, the India Meteorological Department said, "Conditions are favourable for further advance of southwest monsoon into some more parts of south-

west and southeast Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep area, southwest, eastcen-

tral and westcentral Bay of Bengal, remaining parts of southeast Bay of Bengal and some parts of northeast Bay of Bengal during the next 2-3 days."

India receives more than 70 pc of its annual rainfall during the monsoon months, making the season critical for



farming, drinking water supply, hydroelectric power generation and groundwater replenishment.

# Pak as mediator problematic: Graham

■ By Sagar Kulkarni

WASHINGTON, May 27 (PTI)

REPUBLICAN Senator Lindsey Graham termed “problematic” the role of Pakistan as a mediator in the United States’ war with



Iran. Graham’s remarks came as Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khwaja Asif said he is not in favour of Islamabad joining the Abraham Accords, which deal with establishing diplomatic, economic and security ties between Israel and Arab nations.

Asif also talked about his country’s long-standing position to not accept Israel until the Palestinian state on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital is established. “It has been apparent to me for quite a while that Pakistan as a mediator is more than problematic. Their animosity towards Israel is long standing,” Graham said in a post on X. He asked Pakistan to respond to US President Donald Trump’s call to mediators in the US-Iran war to join the Accords.

## China supports Pak mediation: Wang

UNITED NATIONS, May 27 (PTI)

CHINA has said it supports the “active mediation” by Pakistan and other countries between the US and Iran in the ongoing West Asia conflict.

“Regarding the current situation, the key is the negotiation between the United States and Iran because they are the major parties concerned,” Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters here Tuesday.



“We support the active mediation by Pakistan and other countries. Before we came here, I met with (Field) Marshal (Asim) Munir of Pakistan. We also support efforts made by the United States and Iran, respectively,” Wang said.

China is the president of the UN Security Council for the month of May and hosted a Council debate on ‘Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and strengthening the UN-centred international system’.

# Assam Assembly passes UCC Bill

GUWAHATI, May 27 (PTI)

**THE** Assam Assembly on Wednesday passed the UCC Bill that seeks to put in place a common legal framework to govern marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion, even as the Opposition demanded that it be sent to a select committee.

With the passage of the proposed legislation, Assam became the third State, after Uttarakhand and Gujarat, to pass a Uniform Civil Code Bill.

Goa also has one common civil law, which continued from its erstwhile Portuguese colonial

period.

After a day-long discussion on the 'The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, 2026 Bill', Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass asked Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to move it for passage.

Dass rejected the Opposition's demand that the Bill be sent to a select committee for wider consultation, prompting them to move to the Well of the House and keep on shouting till the Bill was passed. The Speaker put the Bill for voice voting, amid continuous slogans of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Jai Shree Ram' by the ruling bench.

"I declare that the Bill is

passed," he said after the ruling members voted in favour of it.

As soon as the Bill was passed, it was welcomed by a thunderous applause.

Aiming for a common set of laws on a range of personal matters like marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion, the Assam Government had on Monday tabled a Bill on the Uniform Civil Code, seeking to ban polygamy and make registration of live-in relationships compulsory.

The Bill, however, said that it will not be applicable to any person belonging to the Scheduled Tribes and residing in Assam.

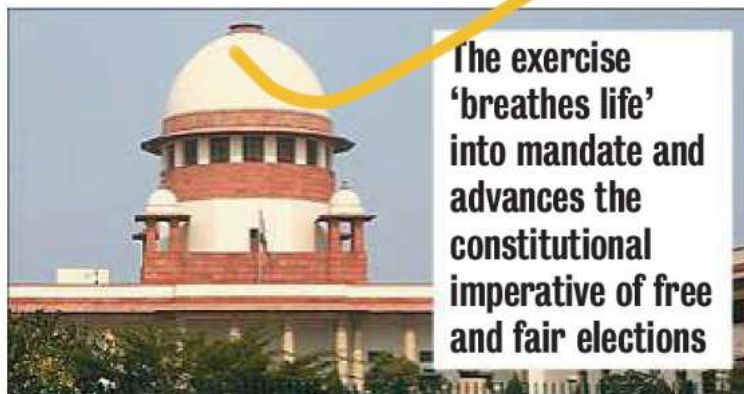
# SC upholds EC's power for SIR

NEW DELHI, May 27 (PTI)

**DELIVERING** a major victory for the Election Commission, the Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld its power to conduct a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls and said the exercise "breathes life" into the constitutional mandate for fair elections.

In its ruling on the intensely debated issue, a Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant held that the exercise advances the "constitutional imperative of free and fair elections".

The bench, also comprising Justice Joymalya Bagchi, held that the poll panel was empow-



**The exercise 'breathes life' into mandate and advances the constitutional imperative of free and fair elections**

ered under Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) to carry out special revisions.

Disposing of a batch of petitions challenging the SIR exer-

cise in Bihar, the apex court held that deletion from the voter list does not amount to a legal declaration that an individual is not a citizen.

The 124-page judgement, authored by the CJI, agreed with

the EC's reasoning on the need for SIR. The passage of more than two decades since the last intensive revision, large-scale additions and deletions over that period, rapid urbanisation, migration, and the resulting possibility of repeated or defective entries are valid grounds for the SIR to preserve foundational integrity of polls, the judgement said.

The Supreme Court verdict led to sharp political reactions from across the political spectrum.

According to the apex court, the credibility of the democratic process rests on the accuracy of the voter list.

"We are unable to conclude that the impugned exercise is a  
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