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Trump, Modi signal trade talks may resume

Both leaders to speak directly in the 'upcoming weeks', which could restart ruptured relations

Countries still on track to meet the fall deadline for a deal, a commitment that was made in February

Dialogue with the U.S. continues and ties could not be one-sided, says Union Minister Goyal

Suhasini Haidar
T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Trade negotiations between India and the U.S. are set to resume, President Donald Trump has announced, as he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi exchanged cordial messages on social media.

The leaders will speak directly in the "upcoming weeks", which could indicate a restart to relations that were ruptured over the imposition of 50% tariffs on India, demands for India to stop importing Russian oil, and conflicting versions on the Operation Sindoor ceasefire.

While no date has been announced for the formal resumption of talks for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), government sources said on Wednesday they were "still on track to meet

the fall deadline for the deal", referring to the commitment made by both leaders at their White House meet in February.

Mr. Trump was the first to post overnight on Truth Social, four days after he told presspersons at the White House that India-U.S. tensions were "nothing to worry about".

"I am pleased to announce that India and U.S. are continuing negotiations to address Trade Barriers between our two Nations," Mr. Trump said.

"I look forward to speaking with my very good friend, Prime Minister Modi, in the upcoming weeks," he added, promising a "successful conclusion" for both countries.

Hours later, Mr. Modi quoted the U.S. President's post on social media platform X, saying that he was "confident that trade negotiations will pave the way



for unlocking the limitless potential of the India-U.S. partnership".

"Our teams are working to conclude these discussions at the earliest," Mr. Modi said, adding that he too looked forward to the call with Mr. Trump.

"We are in active dialogue with the U.S.," Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said. Speaking at an

event organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry on Wednesday, he said that no business partnership or friendship could be "one-sided".

Asked how the trade talks were brought "back on track", government officials pointed to a number of initiatives by New Delhi to Washington, including

by Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Vinay Kwatra, who has met nearly 30 U.S. Representatives and about 10 influential Senators in the past month, apart from think tanks, media organisations, and State department officials, even as Defence and Space exchanges continued "as normal".

India also hosted three U.S. lawmakers, including Brian Fitzpatrick, who had earlier moved a Bill calling for heavy sanctions on India for its dealings with Russia during the Ukraine war.

According to a Washington-based source, a "high-level" Indian outreach was also made to U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in late August, proposing a return to the FTA negotiations.

According to the source, the White House said that the "ball is in India's court", referring to an elimination or at least a re-

duction in India's import of oil from Russia.

The External Affairs Ministry declined to respond to a written request from *The Hindu* about the alleged outreach to Washington by a senior member of the government, but it did not deny the claim either.

India has thus far rejected U.S. calls to cut Russian oil, asserting it as a "sovereign decision" based on market positions.

'No official directions'

India's oil importers and major public sectors undertakings (PSU) said there have been "no official directions" on future purchases from Russia, which amounted to 2 million bpd (barrels per day) in August.

However, a senior official in one of the top oil importing Indian companies, told *The Hindu* that "no new orders" had been placed for Russian oil by

his company in September so far.

"The oil that has so far entered the country from Russia has been from those orders that were placed before the additional tariffs were imposed. The oil that will come in November will be orders placed in September," the official, who asked not to be named, explained.

Sources also said there was still no clarity on whether Mr. Trump would travel to India for the Quad summit later this year.

However, officials on both sides indicated that his likely visit to South Korea for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) on October 31 and November 1, where he is expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping, could serve as a potential precursor to a broader Asia tour that may include other countries.

India-U.S. Trade Talks Likely to Resume

• English:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump signaled a restart of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations. Main issues: U.S. tariffs on Indian goods, India's Russian oil imports, and broader economic ties. India is firm on its sovereign decision to import oil from Russia.

• Relevance: UPSC GS-II (International Relations), Economy.

• Hindi:

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने मुक्त व्यापार समझौते (FTA) की वार्ता पुनः शुरू करने का संकेत दिया। मुख्य मुद्दे: अमेरिकी शुल्क, भारत का रूस से तेल आयात और द्विपक्षीय आर्थिक संबंध। भारत ने स्पष्ट किया कि रूस से तेल आयात उसका "सांविधानिक निर्णय" है।

Nepal Army takes charge, as an uneasy calm returns after days of violent unrest

Sanjeev Satgainya
KATHMANDU

An uneasy calm returned to Nepal on Wednesday after two days of protests led by Gen-Z members which resulted in the deaths of over two dozen people, even as the Army took control of security and issued restrictive orders and a night-time curfew.

Soldiers fanned out across capital Kathmandu and other regions of the country from early Wednesday, in accordance with the decision taken by the Army leadership in consultation with President Ram Chandra Poudel late on Tuesday, following K.P. Sharma Oli's resignation as Prime Minister.

After 19 people were killed in police firing on Monday, when Gen Z took to the streets demanding "an end to corruption and misgovernance", the protests turned violent on Tuesday. Demonstrators torched major government buildings. The Ministry of Health and Population, in a statement, updated the death toll to 30, with 1,033 people receiving treatment at various hospitals.

With no clear structural leadership among the Gen-Z protesters, the next course of action remains unclear. Protester groups held meetings with Nepal Army Chief Gen. Ashok Sigdel on Tuesday evening and Wednesday to discuss possible next steps.

Disagreement has emerged among the Gen-Z campaigners, who have been holding internal discussions on the digital platform Discord, over who should lead an interim ad-



Smoke billows out from a hotel, which was set on fire by protesters amid the violent protest in Kathmandu on Wednesday. ANI

ministration. Some are backing former Chief Justice Sushila Karki, while others support Balendra Shah, the Mayor of Kathmandu. Protestors gathered in front of the Army headquarters in Kathmandu late on Wednesday, after failing to reach a consensus. Ms. Karki is widely seen as a clean and upright figure who could have broad public acceptance. Mr. Shah, who is popular among Nepali youth, has already set a precondition that Parliament should be dissolved first.

Flights resume

Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu resumed operations from Wednesday afternoon after remaining shut for over 24 hours.

In view of the spiralling protests on Tuesday, it was widely expected that the Army would step in immediately. But the consultation between the President and the Army leadership only began late that evening. The Army, which said it was taking over security from Tuesday night, started deploying soldiers on the streets only on Wednesday morning.

Meanwhile, local media

reported that Ravilakshmi Chiratkar, wife of former Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal, is undergoing treatment after being injured in an arson attack at their residence. Earlier false rumours of her death spread on social media.

As soon as the Army took control of security on Wednesday, it faced the challenge of preventing inmates of the Dillibazaar prison, in the heart of Kathmandu, from fleeing custody. The prison break began on Tuesday after Rabi Lamichhane, chief of the Rastriya Swatantra Party, was "released" from Nakkhu prison on the outskirts of Kathmandu, citing security reasons.

Officials estimated that close to 1,500 inmates fled the prison. While the Army managed to secure the Dillibazaar prison, over 3,000 inmates from the Bhadra Detention Center in Kathmandu have escaped.

(Sanjeev Satgainya is a journalist based in Kathmandu)

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Nepal Unrest and Army Takeover

- **English:**
Gen-Z led protests in Nepal over corruption and misgovernance left 30 dead. Army imposed curfew, took charge after PM K.P. Oli resigned. Thousands of prisoners escaped, some caught on Indo-Nepal border.
- **Relevance:** UPSC/BPSC GS-II (International Relations, Neighborhood Studies).
- **Hindi:**
नेपाल में भ्रष्टाचार व कुप्रशासन के खिलाफ 'Gen-Z' के नेतृत्व में विरोध प्रदर्शन में 30 लोगों की मौत हुई। पीएम के.पी. ओली ने इस्तीफा दिया। सेना ने कर्फ्यू लगाकर सत्ता संभाली। हजारों कैदी भाग निकले, कुछ को भारत-नेपाल सीमा पर पकड़ा गया।

SC flags Governors sitting on Bills for years as Central govt. terms dispute a 'false alarm'

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, heading a five-judge Presidential Reference Bench, on Wednesday pointed to Governors sitting on Bills for years together even as the Union government referred to disputes raised by non-BJP-ruled States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala over inexplicable gubernatorial delay as a "false alarm".

"How can you say that when Governors are sitting over Bills for four years," Chief Justice Gavai asked the Centre, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

The Reference had followed an April 8 judgment

of the court in the Tamil Nadu Governor case, which prescribed a three-month timeline for the President and the Governor to decide Bills.

Tamil Nadu had approached the court after the Governor sat on 10 Bills for four years, since 2020.

'Act collaboratively'

Mr. Mehta reasoned the Centre was not justifying Governors delaying assent to Bills "endlessly". He had only meant to say that a State and its Governor must act "collaboratively" to ensure the smooth working of the Constitution.

Mr. Mehta said "collaboration" was possible only if both parties (State and Go-



vernor) had powers. He argued there was no room for collaboration if the Governor was expected to toe the line of the State Cabinet and mechanically sign Bills put before him for assent.

"The Governor cannot be reduced to an ornamental head of State. We may have had some aberrations, but for the past 55

years, every Governor has acted in a way expected of them, in a collaborative manner," Mr. Mehta submitted.

He objected to the argument by non-BJP-ruled States that instances of Governors delaying Bills had increased after the NDA government came to power in 2014 at the Centre.

Justice Vikram Nath observed that the Reference Bench was not tracing what happened before or after 2014.

The court was answering the questions of law raised by the President in the Reference.

Justice P.S. Narasimha tested the Centre's submission that the moment a Governor withheld assent to a

Bill in the first instance under Article 200, the proposed law would fail. The judge asked how a Bill passed by both Houses of the State legislature, after due consultation, could be failed by the solitary action of the Governor withholding assent.

"Should there not be a consultative process by which the Bill is returned to the State legislature for reconsideration. This way, both the State Assembly and the Governor get a role to play," Justice Narasimha said.

Appearing for both Tamil Nadu and its ruling party, DMK, senior advocate P. Wilson argued that a Bill was an "expression of political will".

SC on Governors Sitting Over Bills

- **English:**
The Supreme Court questioned Governors delaying assent to Bills for years. It reiterated the April 8 judgment that mandated a 3-month timeline. Debate: Governor's powers vs. State legislature's democratic mandate.
- **Relevance:** UPSC GS-II (Polity - Centre-State Relations, Governor's role).
- **Hindi:**
सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने राज्यों के विधेयकों पर राज्यपालों द्वारा वर्षों तक हस्ताक्षर टालने पर गंभीर सवाल उठाए। अदालत ने कहा कि 3 महीने में निर्णय आवश्यक है। बहस: राज्यपाल की शक्तियाँ बनाम विधानमंडल की लोकतांत्रिक इच्छा।



Wangchuk begins 35-day fast to press for Ladakh Statehood

Sonam Wangchuk, climate activist and member of the Leh Apex Body, and his supporters on Wednesday started a 35-day hunger strike to press for the demands of Statehood and special status under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution for the Union Territory of Ladakh. Fifteen people joined Mr. Wangchuk's protest, including seven former soldiers of the Army. "In the first phase, we will sit on a hunger strike for 35 days or five weeks. If we survive it, we will follow it up with another six-week hunger strike. If the Centre resumes result-oriented talks on our demands, the strike will be called off," the activist said in Leh.

Sonam Wangchuk's Hunger Strike in Ladakh

- **English:**
Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk started a 35-day hunger strike demanding Statehood and Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh. Former Army personnel joined the protest.
- **Relevance:** UPSC GS-II (Federalism, Tribal Rights, Sixth Schedule).
- **Hindi:**
जलवायु कार्यकर्ता सोनम वांगचुक ने लद्दाख को राज्य का दर्जा और छठी अनुसूची के तहत विशेष दर्जा देने की मांग को लेकर 35 दिन का उपवास शुरू किया। कई पूर्व सैनिक भी शामिल हुए।

Constitute Indo-Bhutan River Commission with West Bengal as member: Mamata to Centre

Shiv Sahay Singh

KOLKATA

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday reiterated her demand for the establishment of an Indo-Bhutan River Commission with West Bengal as one of its members.

“We have repeatedly demanded that Bengal be made a member of such a panel. It is necessary because the waters of Bhutan’s Sankosh river flood Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar. Malda also goes under water,” Ms. Banerjee told reporters during a three-day visit to north Bengal.

In response to a question posed by Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member Ritabrata Banerjee on August 11, the Ministry of Jal Shakti had informed Parliament that there is no proposal under consideration for setting up such a commission.



Mamata Banerjee in Jalpaiguri, north Bengal, on Wednesday. PTI

However, the Ministry pointed out that India and Bhutan have entered into bilateral cooperation on flood-related issues, which includes a Joint Group of Experts and a Joint Technical Team on flood management, and a Joint Experts Team on flood forecasting. “These expert groups meet at regular intervals to discuss issues related to trans-border rivers,” it stated.

Ms. Banerjee said there is “impending danger” of floods in the State and that the rivers of Bhutan, Nepal, and Teesta from Sik-

kim pose a risk to north Bengal. She said the release of waters from reservoirs of the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) causes floods in south Bengal. She has previously blamed the DVC for flooding in south Bengal, terming it “man-made”.

“The terrain of West Bengal is like that of a boat. The Ganga in Bengal is still full because of waters from U.P. and Bihar. The Centre must think about how much water Bengal can actually absorb,” she said.

Ms. Banerjee also criticised the Union Budget, claiming that not a single paisa was allocated to West Bengal for flood control, whereas Assam was given funds. “But they must understand that whenever a disaster comes, it does not remain confined to one region, it affects all... it is Bengal that is facing the maximum brunt,” she said.

Indo-Bhutan River Commission Demand

- **English:**
West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee demanded an Indo-Bhutan River Commission citing floods in Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, and Malda due to rivers from Bhutan.
- **Relevance:** UPSC GS-I & GS-II (Geography – Rivers, Polity – Centre-State).
- **Hindi:**

प. बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी ने इंडो-भूटान रिवर कमीशन की मांग की। कारण: जलपाईगुड़ी, अलीपुरद्वार और मालदा में भूटान से आने वाली नदियों के कारण बाढ़।

Acquitted but forgotten: courts, experts flag lack of compensation policy for those wrongly incarcerated

Soibam Rocky Singh
NEW DELHI

In July this year, the Supreme Court acquitted a man who had been sentenced to death for killing his two children, wife and her sister in 2013, after finding “glaring investigative defects”. Baljinder Kumar from Kapurthala, Punjab, had by then spent 11 years in prison, including five on death row.

His case is a stark example of wrongful incarceration, but it is not unique. Many others have been convicted by lower courts, their convictions upheld by High Courts, only to be overturned years later by the apex court.

What is more worrying is that there is no statutory



India has no law to compensate those wrongfully incarcerated for longer periods. FILE PHOTO

or legal scheme to compensate those wrongfully incarcerated for prolonged periods.

In 2018, the National Human Rights Commission took up the case of Mohammad Amir Khan, who was wrongly incarcerated for 14 years on false

terror charges. He was awarded compensation of ₹5 lakh by the Delhi government. Mr. Khan, who was 18 at the time of his arrest, said that while the compensation could not make up for the lost years, it would help him provide a better education for his daughter.

‘Can’t legislate’

In 2021, advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay filed a case before the Supreme Court seeking the framing of appropriate guidelines to compensate victims of wrongful prosecution.

The court, however, declined the plea saying that the nature of the relief prayed for was “virtually asking this court to legislate on the point”.

On July 16, the apex court, while acquitting a man sentenced to death by a trial court in Kerala and the State’s High Court, suggested that Parliament could consider foreign models to compensate those wrongfully incarcerated.

Advocate Prabhav Ralli said India should follow countries such as Portugal, New Zealand and the United States that provide compensation for wrongful incarceration.

“Such a move will also act as a deterrent to false implication,” he added.

Foreign models

In the U.S., for instance, several States have systems for compensating those who were wrongfully convicted and later exonerated.

The amount is sometimes calculated based on the number of years wrongfully served.

Senior advocate and constitutional law expert Sanjay Hegde said, “The principles underlying compensation have to be legally spelt out either by Parliament or by the court in a proper proceeding.”

“The problem with leaving the issue to the government is that it would not want to introduce such a scheme because that would amount to the acknowledgement of liability,” Mr. Hegde explained.

“On the other hand, those acquitted after a long period often don’t have the energy to fight another legal battle to claim compensation,” he added.

Wrongful Incarceration – No Compensation Policy

- **English:**

Supreme Court acquitted Baljinder Kumar (11 years in prison, 5 on death row) citing investigative lapses. Experts highlighted India lacks a law to compensate victims of wrongful imprisonment, unlike the U.S., Portugal, and New Zealand.

- **Relevance: UPSC GS-II (Judiciary, Human Rights).**

- **Hindi:**

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने बलजिंदर कुमार को बरी किया, जो 11 वर्ष जेल और 5 वर्ष फांसी की सजा में रहा। भारत में गलत कैद पर मुआवज़ा देने का कोई कानून नहीं है, जबकि अमेरिका, पुर्तगाल और न्यूजीलैंड में ऐसा है।

Manipur law to regulate issuance of certificates to SC, OBC communities gets Presidential assent

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The law to regulate the issuance of caste certificates for the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Other Backward Class (OBC) communities in Manipur, introduced by the erstwhile Manipur government in 2024 amid the ethnic conflict in the State, has received the assent of the President.

The law was brought by the then Biren Singh government in 2024, and is

meant to “prevent fraudulent cases” of people claiming caste status and to bring uniformity in the processes for issuing caste certificates, according to the Bill’s Statement of Objects and Reasons.

Manipur has seven communities classified as SC and four communities categorised as OBC. Reservation in public education and employment for SCs is prescribed in the State at 2% and for OBCs at 17%. For Scheduled Tribes

(STs), the reservation is 31%.

Detailed vetting process

The provisions of the law set out procedures for applying for caste certificates, competent authorities for issuing the certificates, and scrutiny committees to verify them, offences and penalties, among other things. The Bill had added that most other States had already framed such provisions.

Notably, the law, which

received the Presidential assent in July this year, provides for the setting up of one or more Scrutiny Committees, which are meant to verify suspicious caste certificates.

It also gives these committees the power to verify a caste certificate *suo motu*, adding that the decision of the panel would be final and can only be challenged in the High Court.

However, it adds that the certificate of the person will remain valid dur-

ing the verification process until a final decision is arrived.

While States like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh do have specific laws to regulate caste certificates, several others regulate through executive orders and circulars. Maharashtra also has provisions for setting up Scrutiny Committees, but Andhra Pradesh has given this power of *suo motu* verification to the District Collector.

Manipur Caste Certificate Regulation Law

- **English:**

President approved Manipur’s law (2024) regulating SC & OBC caste certificates to prevent fraudulent claims. Provides scrutiny committees with suo motu powers, challengeable only in High Court.

- **Relevance:** UPSC/BPSC GS-II (Polity – Caste, Affirmative Action).

- **Hindi:**

राष्ट्रपति ने मणिपुर सरकार के कानून को मंजूरी दी, जो SC व OBC जाति प्रमाणपत्र जारी करने की प्रक्रिया को नियंत्रित करेगा। इसमें जांच समितियों को स्वतः जांच करने का अधिकार है।

Tourists, pilgrims stranded in Nepal

600 pilgrims on Kailash Mansarovar Yatra stranded in Taklakot on the Nepal-China border; tourists take refuge in hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara as they wait for situation to ease: State governments working with External Affairs Ministry to bring back people and reassure families of their safety

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Nearly 600 Indian pilgrims who had gone for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through private tour operators have been stranded in Taklakot on the Nepal-China border. A large number of Indian tourists are also stranded in Kathmandu, Pokhara and other locations across Nepal where the months from October to December is considered to be the peak holiday season.

In view of the prevailing situation, the tourists stranded in Taklakot are unable to enter Nepal and most of them are facing problems due to a lack of accommodation and resources.

Sridhar, a pilgrim from Andhra Pradesh, told *The Hindu* that the situation was dire as many had fallen sick and were in need of urgent medical attention. "We urge the Government of India to help us as there are hundreds of us here and the Nepal border is not yet open," Mr. Sridhar said.

The Ministry of External Affairs said in an advisory that the pilgrims should take "necessary care and precautions" and follow advisories from local authorities as well as the Embassy of India in Beijing.



Tense moments: Passengers wait at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu after it reopened on Wednesday, following a closure due to civil unrest in Nepal. AFP

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday wrote to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar seeking urgent intervention to ensure the safe evacuation of a group of tourists from Kerala stranded in Pokhara.

In the letter, Mr. Vijayan said that the anti-government protests in Nepal had taken place near areas where most of the visitors from Kerala, including senior citizens, were staying. Interventions should be made to urgently bring them back home safely, he said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said efforts were under way to bring back tourists from the State, who have been stranded in violence-hit Nepal.

"We are also making arrangements from the State government. You stay there for one or two more days. Do not be in a rush to get out and fall into any trouble," Ms. Banerjee said. West Bengal shares about a 100-km border with Nepal.

"If you or someone you know requires assistance for returning to India through Panitanki or Pashupati check post under Darjeeling district, please contact on the numbers given below. Mobile/WhatsApp: 9147889078. Landline: 0354-2252057," the West Bengal Police posted on social media.

Several tourists from Telangana have been stranded in Kathmandu after the airport was shut down. "We arrived in Kathmandu last Saturday on a business trip. We took a 25-minute flight to Pokhara from there and came back. We were supposed to return to Hyderabad on Thursday but are cooped up in our hotel," said Shyam Mohan, a businessman from Malkajigiri.

"As of now, we are safe and confined to our hotel. There is no problem with regard to food and water. But we were terrified when we noticed a hotel about 500 yards away being burned down," he said.

Air India and IndiGo to operate special flights

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Air India and IndiGo will be operating special flights to Kathmandu to bring back stranded Indians following violent protests that resulted in the airport shutting down for over 24 hours since Tuesday afternoon.

"Many home-bound passengers were unable to return from Kathmandu. With the opening of the airport operation in

Kathmandu, @MoCA_GoI, in coordination with Air India & IndiGo, has arranged additional flights this evening & over the next few days," Minister for Civil Aviation K. Ramamohan Naidu wrote in a post on X.

Meanwhile, Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport resumed flight operations and various airlines announced resumption of flight services from Thursday.

The Maharashtra government is making all efforts to ensure the safe return of tourists from the State stranded in Nepal, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said.

"Our top priority is to bring every tourist from Maharashtra back home safely and to reassure their families. There is no need for anyone to panic," he said.

According to preliminary information, around 100 tourists from Thane, Pune, Mumbai, Latur and Kolhapur districts are currently stranded in Nepal.

Tourists and Pilgrims Stranded in Nepal

- **English:**
600 Indian Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims stranded in Taklakot (Nepal-China border) amid protests in Nepal. MEA and State governments coordinating evacuation.
- **Relevance:** UPSC GS-II (Diaspora, Neighborhood Policy).
- **Hindi:**
नेपाल में विरोध प्रदर्शनों के बीच कैलाश मानसरोवर यात्रा पर गए 600 भारतीय तीर्थयात्री तकलाकोट (नेपाल-चीन सीमा) पर फंसे। विदेश मंत्रालय और राज्य सरकारें निकासी की कोशिश में।

'Duped by agent, 15 Indians pinned down in Ukraine-Russia war zone'

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Two Indian nationals have told *The Hindu* that they are caught in the battlefield in Ukraine, where they are being forced to serve on the Russian side. The two recruits claimed there were at least 13 more Indians with them.

All of them went to Moscow on student or visitor visa in the past six months. They were hired by an agent to work as construction workers but ended up in the war zone, the two men said on telephone from Selydove in Ukraine. Russia claimed Selydove, a key town in the Donetsk region, in November 2024.

A response from the External Affairs Ministry is awaited. The Russian Embassy had said in a statement last year that it no longer recruited Indians into its Army. The assurance came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin during his visit to Moscow in July 2024. The External Affairs Ministry has issued several advisories cautioning Indians from falling prey to such jobs.

Sumit Sharma, 22, a resident of Jammu, said he came to Russia around six



Left in lurch: The recruits are reportedly being forced to serve on the Russian side. VIDEO GRAB: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

months ago and was pursuing a language course at the Moscow State Linguistic University (MSLU).

"To earn extra money, I was looking for odd jobs when a woman contacted me and assured me construction work. I was instead asked to sign papers and enlist in the Russian Army. I came to the camp on August 20 and without any training, they have brought us to an occupied area in Ukraine and are not letting us leave," Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu*.

No help from embassy

He said they had made multiple calls and sent several e-mails to the Indian Embassy in Moscow but no help had reached them.

"There are 15 Indians here. Some were taken to the war zone further ahead and at least four are mis-

sing. We are hearing that they have been killed in the war. Please save us," Mr. Sharma said.

Asked why he did not pay heed to advisories by the Indian government, Mr. Sharma said, "I had no idea, the agent promised us good money."

The other residents of the camp released a video in Punjabi where they are seen urging the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government to rescue them.

Gursevak Singh, 26, from Gurdaspur in Punjab, who came to Russia on a student visa, is also among those stuck in the war zone.

"Seven of us have been kept in a building in Ukraine. They are saying they will send me to the forward location tomorrow. A resident of Rajasthan who had come with us and was sent

to a forward post has not been reachable for the past four days. He shot a video saying this could be his last. I do not want to meet the same fate," Mr. Singh said.

He said his mother lived in Punjab and before coming to Russia, he used to tend to his fields.

On August 10, 2024, the Russian Embassy said it no longer admitted Indians into its Army. The embassy added it was working in "close coordination" with Indian authorities to help discharge Indian nationals recruited for the war in Ukraine.

The External Affairs Ministry informed the Rajya Sabha on July 24 that there were 127 Indian nationals in the Russian armed forces, of which the services of 98 had been discontinued as a result of sustained engagement between the Indian and Russian governments. The Ministry said 13 Indians remained in the Russian forces, of which 12 were reported missing by the Russian side.

The Hindu reported first on February 20, 2024 that Indians who travelled to Russia on tourist visas were offered jobs as security helpers but were forced to fight alongside the Russian military.

Indians Forced into Russia-Ukraine War

- **English:**
15 Indians duped by agents, forced to fight alongside Russian Army in Ukraine. Despite MEA advisories, many still fall prey to fake job offers.
- **Relevance:** UPSC GS-II (International Relations, Diaspora safety).
- **Hindi:**
15 भारतीयों को एजेंटों ने धोखा देकर रूस-यूक्रेन युद्ध में जबरन लड़ने भेजा। विदेश मंत्रालय की चेतावनी के बावजूद कई छात्र-युवक फंस रहे हैं।

Navy strengthens maritime ties with France, Mauritius through joint exercises

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Ships of the Indian Navy's first training squadron (ITS), *INS Tir* and *ICGS Sarathi*, arrived at Réunion island, while *INS Shardul* reached Port Louis, Mauritius, on September 8, as part of their training deployment in the southwest Indian Ocean Region.

At Réunion island, the ships were welcomed by French Navy ship *FS Nivose* with a 'passage exercise'. The visit features professional interactions, including cross-training visits, joint diving exercises, and sports fixtures, furthering the India-France naval partnership. The senior officer of the ITS, also called on the French Naval Base Commander and the Commandant Supérieur des FAZSOI, with discussions centred on regional security, future joint exercises, and maritime cooperation.

The *INS Shardul* conducted joint patrolling and Exclusive Economic Zone surveillance with *MCGS Victory* and a Mauritius Coast Guard Dornier, before arriving at Port Louis. During the port call, the



INS Shardul, a landing ship tank of the Indian Navy, arrives at Port Louis in Mauritius. X/@INDIANNAVY

Commanding Officer of *INS Shardul* met the senior Mauritian leadership, reaffirming the strong bonds of trust and professional cooperation between India and Mauritius, the Indian Navy said.

The concurrent port of calls of the ITS highlight India's commitment to "maritime collaboration, and regional stability, aligned with the vision of MAHA-SAGAR", and the Indian Navy's enduring role in building bridges of friendship across the Indian Ocean Region, the Navy said in a statement.

The *INS Surat*, the In-

dian Navy's latest indigenous guided missile destroyer, mission deployed in the north Arabian Sea, participated in a passage exercise with *ITS Caio Duilio*, an Andrea Doria class destroyer of the Italian Navy, on September 7.

The exercise featured complex tactical manoeuvres, aircraft tracking, seamanship evolutions, communication drills, and flying operations, including cross-deck helicopter landings. The PASSEX concluded with a ceremonial steampast, where the two navies exchanged traditional courtesies at sea.

Indian Navy Exercises with France & Mauritius

- **English:**
INS Tir, INS Shardul, and ICGS Sarathi conducted joint naval exercises with French and Mauritian navies. Strengthens India's "MAHASAGAR" vision for regional maritime security.
- **Relevance:** UPSC GS-III (Defence, Security, Indian Ocean Strategy).
- **Hindi:**
INS तीर, INS शार्दुल और ICGS सारथी ने फ्रांस और मॉरीशस नौसेना के साथ संयुक्त अभ्यास किया। यह भारत की "महासागर" दृष्टि और समुद्री सुरक्षा रणनीति को मजबूत करता है।