

In Iran, Jaishankar says must address Red Sea security

Chabahar Port, Ukraine, Gaza Also Discussed

TNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi: Amid the latest flare-up in West Asia, which has seen US and UK launch air strikes on Iran-backed Houthi targets in Yemen, external affairs minister S Jaishankar discussed the Gaza situation with his Iranian counterpart H Amirabdollahian in Tehran, underlining India's support for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and its condemnation of the October 7 Hamas terror attacks on Israel. The minister called for addressing the threat to maritime security in the Red Sea where the Houthis have targeted commercial vessels.

Jaishankar also spoke about the situation in Afghanistan, Ukraine and also cooperation under BRICS.

"Our bilateral discussion focused on the long term framework for India's involvement with Chabahar port and the INSTC connectivity project. Also spoke about threats to maritime shipping in the region. Important that this be speedily addressed," said Jaishankar in a post on X.



In Tehran as part of an ongoing high-level exchange between the two countries, EAM Jaishankar met President Dr Ebrahim Raisi on Monday

Speaking about attacks in the vicinity of India, Jaishankar said it is a matter of great concern to the international community. "Obviously, it also has a direct bearing on India's energy and economic interests. This fraught situation is not to the benefit of any party and must be clearly recognised," he said, stressing the need to avoid provocative and escalatory actions.

He said, while India had an uncompromising position against terrorism in all forms and manifestations, it strongly believed that it's imperative to avoid loss of civilian life in any conflict situation.

Jaishankar, who is in the Iranian capital as part of the ongoing high-level exchanges between the two sides, also called on Iranian President Dr Ebrahim Raisi

and conveyed the greetings of PM Narendra Modi.

Iran's official IRNA news agency earlier reported that foreign minister Amirabdollahian and his Indian counterpart discussed developing bilateral relations. "They also reviewed regional and international developments," the report added.

Earlier on Monday, Jaishankar began his engagements in Iran by meeting minister of roads and urban development Mehرداد Bazrpash during which the two sides held a detailed and "productive" discussion on establishing a long-term cooperation framework on the strategically vital Chabahar port.

Jaishankar also exchanged views on the International North-South Transport Corridor with Bazrpash.

PM Modi speaks to Putin; discusses global issues

NEW DELHI, Jan 15 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday agreed to chalk out a roadmap for future initiatives to further strengthen the "special and privileged strategic partnership" between the two nations.

Modi said he had a "good conversation" with Putin and exchanged views on various regional and global issues, including Russia's Presidency of the BRICS in 2024.

Last month, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Russia, during which the two countries decided to step up

military and technical cooperation, including manufacturing of modern weaponry.

"Had a good conversation with President Putin. We discussed various positive developments in our Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership and agreed to chalk out a roadmap for future initiatives. We also had a useful exchange of views on various regional and global issues, including Russia's Presidency of the BRICS," Prime Minister said.

Later in a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said Modi and Putin reviewed progress on a number of issues of bilateral cooperation in fol-

low-up to recent high-level exchanges between the two countries.

"They positively assessed the developments in bilateral relations and agreed to develop a roadmap for future initiatives to further strengthen the India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership," the MEA statement said.

Modi also conveyed his best wishes for Russia's Presidency of BRICS in 2024 and assured India's full support, the MEA statement said, adding that the two leaders agreed to remain in touch. Russia assumed BRICS presidency from January 1, 2024.

WHOLESALE INFLATION

Rises to 9-month high of 0.73 pc in Dec



NEW DELHI, Jan 15 (PTI)

THE wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation rose to a nine-month high of 0.73 per cent in December 2023, mainly due to a sharp rise in food prices. The WPI inflation was in the negative zone from April to October and had turned positive in November at 0.26 per cent. In December 2022, it was 5.02 per cent.

“Positive rate of inflation in December 2023 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, machinery & equipment, other manufacturing, other transport equipment and computer, electronics and optical products etc,” the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a statement on Monday. The last high level of WPI inflation was recorded in March 2023, when it was 1.41 per

cent. In December 2023, food inflation rose to 9.38 per cent from 8.18 per cent in November. Within food articles, items that contributed significantly to wholesale inflation were paddy, pulses and vegetables.

Inflation in vegetables and pulses was 26.30 per cent and 19.60 per cent respectively, while in paddy it was 10.54 per cent in December 2023.

Within vegetables, onion inflation was 91.77 per cent and has been consistently in double digits since August 2023. Potato continued to be in deflation at (-)24.08 per cent in December. In the fuel and power segment, inflation was (-)2.41 per cent, as against (-)4.61 per cent in November 2023. In manufactured products, inflation was (-)0.71 per cent, as against (-)0.64 per cent in the previous month. Barclays in its report said the wholesale inflation trajectory shows input costs remain under control and the momentum in food and manufactured product prices eased significantly.

“We expect RBI to begin monetary easing from June, with three 25 basis points rate cuts in the current calendar year,” Barclays said.

India 5th most attractive place for investment: PwC

'Moves Up 4 Spots, Counters Global Slowdown Impact'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India was seen to be the fifth preferred destination to invest after the US, China, Germany and the UK, moving up four places from last year, a survey by consulting and audit firm PwC said.

"Global perception validates India's position as an investment destination... The fourth most-favoured destination in 2020, India slipped to the fifth position a year later, the eighth spot in 2022 and ninth in 2023," the annual survey released on the eve of the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos said.

Most CEOs—and it included responses from 4,702 of them, including 79 from India—were more upbeat on growth than last year with those in India reporting a 30-percentage point increase in optimism. "India appears to have countered the impact of

RISING OPTIMISM

Preferred investment destinations

(Data in % based on poll of CEOs)



Source: PwC Annual CEO Survey; India Perspective

global economic slowdown through government capex spending, domestic demand and its other economic shock absorbers. Strong fundamentals, healthier balance sheets for banks and corporates, fiscal consolidation, manageable external balance, and substantial foreign exchange reserves contribute to a positive outlook," the report said.

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the workforce by 5% over next 12 months, a sharp contrast to 2023 when they had spoken of planned hiring freeze and headcount reduction. Internationally, private equity, hospitality and engineering sectors are among those that are projected to see the highest hiring increases. While there is an expectation of early rate cuts in 2024 in India and the US due to a moderation in inflation, those occupying corner offices flagged more climate and geopolitical shocks as possible risks.

"Cyber and health risks, and inflation figured high among India CEOs' concerns around factors impacting growth of their businesses, while changing customer preferences and technological shifts, primarily evolving GenAI, were identified as top drivers of reinvention," the report said.

Almost 60% of the CEOs surveyed suggested that customer preference was the top driver for change, followed by technological change (57%) and government regulations (47%). It also said that around 71% of India CEOs expected GenAI to increase employee efficiency over the next 12 months, while 70% believed it would improve their own performance. There were some 30%, who said it will result in shrinking of jobs, although there was acknowledgment that new avenues would also open up.

Commandos walk 60 km to set up outpost in Red zone

First Police Presence In Gadchiroli's Naxal Region Since 1947

Soumitra.Bose
@timesgroup.com

Nagpur: Maharashtra police successfully established Monday a police post at Gardewada in Gadchiroli district, strategically positioned just 5km from the Maoist stronghold of Abujmarh. This marks the first police presence in this remote region straddling Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh since India gained independence in 1947.

Around 600 commandos, engaged in road opening exercises to counter potential landmines and ambushes, covered a distance of 60km on foot to reach Gardewada. In a remarkable display of efficiency, approximately 1,500 personnel laboured hard to establish the police post within a day, ensuring logistical support and assembling the basic infrastructure.

Gardewada police post,



The police post is expected to facilitate the construction of a bridge over the stream, ensuring year-round connectivity to Gadchiroli district

situated in remote Etapalli taluka of eastern Vidarbha, is close to Abujmarh as well as 5.5km from Marbeda police camp in Chhattisgarh's Kanker on the other side of the border. The area is renowned as a den for top Maoist cadres, their training camps, and manufacturing units for various activ-

ities, including printing, sewing, and arms and ammunition.

Gardewada gained notoriety during Lok Sabha elections in 2019 when Maoist insurgents disrupted polling by detonating three powerful IEDs. The remote nature of Gardewada is evident as the overflowing Tadguda

nullah isolates the region for six months every year.

The police post is expected to facilitate the construction of a bridge over the stream, ensuring year-round connectivity to Gadchiroli district. A 38km interstate road project linking Gatta-Gardewara-Torgatte-Wangeturi-Mendhri-Panawar across Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh is also anticipated to gain momentum, with around 20km already completed, Gadchiroli SP Neelotpal said. A dozen mobile phone towers too would be set up soon.

According to Neelotpal, the police post would enhance surveillance over 750sq km, formerly considered a Maoist stronghold. "Over the past year, the opening of four police posts in Gadchiroli has effectively addressed a security vacuum covering about 2,000sq km," he said.

Niti paper: In 9 yrs, 24.8cr out of multidimensional poverty

'India Much Ahead Of Target To Cut Poverty By 50% By 2030'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: An estimated 24.8 crore Indians may have moved out of multidimensional poverty in the past nine years, with UP and Bihar recording the biggest improvement, according to a new paper by two top Niti Aayog officials released on Monday.

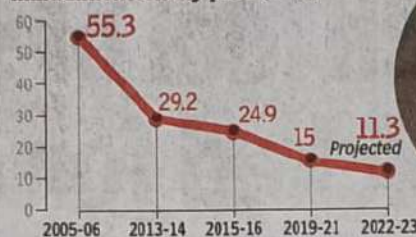
Multidimensional poverty — calculated on the basis of 12 parameters including health, education, housing, maternal health and bank accounts — is projected to have reduced to 11.3% in 2022-23 from 2019-21 and 29.2% in 2013-14, the discussion paper by Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand and senior advisor Yogesh Suri said (see graphic).

Lauding the improvement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "Very encouraging, reflecting our commitment towards furthering inclusive growth and focussing on transformative changes to our economy. We will continue to work towards all-round development and to ensure a prosperous future for every Indian."

Projecting a single-digit level by the next financial

UP, BIHAR RECORD BIGGEST IMPROVEMENT

Proportion of population who are multidimensionally poor (in %)



States with the highest proportion of population who are multidimensionally poor* (in %)



* Projection

Source: Paper by Ramesh Chand, member, NITI Aayog & Yogesh Suri, senior adviser, NITI Aayog

States with steepest fall between 2013-14 and 2022-23 (in cr)



year, the authors argued that India is much ahead of the target in reducing poverty in all its dimensions by half by 2030. "All 12 indicators of MPI (Multidimensional Poverty Index) have shown remarkable improvement during this period," the paper said.

Though it did not provide estimates of several param-

eters, it said that initiatives like Poshan Abhiyan, Anaemia Mukh Bharat and Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan have helped.

"The rate of decline in multidimensional poverty has accelerated during the period 2013-14 to 2022-23. This is made possible by a large number of initiatives/

schemes of government targeted at improving specific deprivation aspects," it said. Chand told reporters that growth in agriculture sector during the nine years up to FY23 has accelerated compared to any other period.

It, however, cautioned that the pace of poverty reduction is faster when levels are higher and further fall may also be linked to externalities. Besides, the projections made in the paper are based on the National Family Health Survey, for which data was collected before the pandemic, and the latest estimates may not fully reflect the impact of the pandemic.

Based on overall numbers, it concluded that UP managed to get 5.9 crore out of poverty, followed by 3.8 crore in Bihar, which is the home to the highest share.

"It is also observed that the states with higher poverty incidence have witnessed higher reduction in head-count ratio poverty over the years, thus indicating that inter-state multidimensional poverty differentials across various States have declined over the years," it said.