

US-Chinese military talks resume on safety in air, at sea after over 2-yr break

WASHINGTON, Apr 5 (AP)

FOR the first time in nearly two years, US and Chinese defence officials met this week to discuss unsafe and aggressive ship and aircraft incidents between the two militaries in the Pacific region, restarting a dialogue that Beijing abruptly ended in a dispute involving Taiwan.

The meeting, which was Wednesday and Thursday in Hawaii, came as Washington and Beijing work to expand communications between the two world powers and ease escalating tensions.

Military-to-military contact had stalled in August 2022, when Beijing suspended all such communication after then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, the self-governing island China claims

as its own. The thaw in relations between the two countries got a kick-start last November when US President Joe Biden and China's President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco. About a month later, Gen CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke with his Chinese counterpart in a video call—in the first senior military-to-military contact since the Pelosi visit.

Other top-level talks have continued, including a call earlier this week between Biden and Xi, and a visit to China by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen that began on Thursday.

The resurgence of senior military leader discussions includes the relaunch of routine engagements.

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India abstains as UN body seeks arms embargo on Israel

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After an air strike on an Israeli consulate in the US had an impact for Iran: We go with it. But enough.

Concerned the demagogues could stir up riots on American-backed Syria, said Grynke, a force commander in the East. Israel played a role in the Pentagon spokesman Singh said the US has assessed as responsible.

Iran's government said they would ally with the US against an attack that would devastate the revolutionary guard in Lebanon. The aid minister said Friday the US had warned against US facilities. The message, the Israeli government warns not to get dragged into the trap for the US: "We won't get hurt. We asked Iran not to use our facilities." AP

India was among 13 countries that abstained from voting on a UN Human Rights Council resolution that called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza but also, in a first, sought an arms embargo on Israel.

The resolution was adopted as 28 countries voted in favour and six, including the US and Germany, against. In all, the Council adopted 5 resolutions, including a text in which it demanded that Israel immediately lift its blockade on the Gaza Strip, according to a statement by the UN Human Rights Office.

The resolution also sought accountability for possible "war crimes" but Israel was reported to have dismissed it as "distorted text". The resolution called for pursuing accountability for "violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law".

Given its strong ties with Israel, India had been reluctant to back a ceasefire in Gaza initially but later came around to voting in favour of a UNGA resolution that demanded humanitarian ceasefire in Dec. The text of the UN human rights resolution, especially the call to cease the transfer of arms to Israel, meant India could only abstain.

The resolution called for a report on both the direct and indirect transfer or sale of arms,



The resolution that also called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza was adopted as 28 countries voted in its favour and six, including the US and Germany, against it

munitions, parts, components and dual use items to "Israel, the occupying power, and to analyse the legal consequences of these transfers". This may be of concern to India if reports about it having supplied lethal Hermes drones to Israel are true.

Israeli representative to the UN, Meirav Eilon Shahar, said the resolution condemned Israel for the war in Gaza but made no mention of Hamas or its Oct 7 terror attack, while also disregarding supply of weapons to Hamas by Iran and its allies.

India voted in favour of other resolutions like the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, which was adopted with 42 votes in favour, human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan and also Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. India has backed these resolutions in the past too.

face wipe-out worse than one in

Army's Naib Subedar martyred in Dibang Sector of Arunachal Pradesh

NEW DELHI, Apr 5 (PTI)

A NAIB Subedar of the Indian Army has made the supreme sacrifice in "bonafide line of duty" in the "operational area" of the Dibang Sector of Arunachal Pradesh, sources said. The Army, in a post on X on Friday, expressed



Naib Subedar
Giriraj Prasad
Yadav

deepest condolences over the demise of Naib Subedar Giriraj Prasad Yadav.

However, the exact cause of his death was not immediately known. "General Manoj Pande #COAS and All Ranks of #IndianArmy salute the supreme sacrifice of Naib Subedar Giriraj Prasad Yadav

who laid down his life in the line of duty in #DibangSector and offer deepest condolences to the bereaved family," the Army said in the post. The Army personnel made the supreme sacrifice in "bonafide line of duty" in the "operational area" of the Dibang Sector. The Army's Eastern Command informed about his death in a post on X in the early hours of Friday.

BIGGEST AIR ATTACK

Ukraine fires more than 50 drones against Russia

KYIV, Apr 5 (AP)

UKRAINE fired more than 40 drones into Russia's bordering Rostov region, Moscow defence officials said on Friday, in what appeared to be one of its biggest air attacks in the war and as Kyiv's forces step up their assaults on Russian soil.

Russia's Defence Ministry said a total of 44 drones were "intercepted and destroyed" in the Morozovsky district, more than 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the border. The attack damaged a power substation, Rostov Governor Vasily Golubev said.

Russian media reported that there is a military airfield near the town of Morozovsk, but it was unclear whether the air-



A Russian tank fires in undisclosed location in Ukraine. (AP/PTI)

field was the target of the attack.

The Russian Defence Ministry said nine more drones were intercepted over Russia's border regions of Kursk, Belgorod, Krasnodar and the nearby Saratov region.

Ukrainian officials rarely comment on such strikes and provided no immediate response. Drone warfare is a key feature of the war, which has extended into a third year since Russia's full-scale invasion of

its neighbour. On the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, where fighting is largely bogged down, low-cost drones are used by both sides to knock out expensive military hardware.

The Kremlin's forces have used large numbers of Iranian-designed Shahed drones to bombard urban areas of Ukraine. Kyiv, in turn, has developed small but fast-growing defense industry where drones, including deadly unmanned sea vessels, are proving effective.

Russian authorities have long accused Ukraine of launching regular drone attacks on power plants, oil refineries and other targets in western regions of Russia near the border.

RBI extends rate pause as food price pressure lingers

Economists Rule Out Rate Cut In First Half Of Current Fiscal

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: RBI's monetary policy committee on Friday decided to keep interest rates on hold for the seventh successive meeting, stating that "growth has surpassed all projections but cautioned that food



price uncertainties continue to weigh on the inflation trajectory going forward".

RBI governor **Shaktikantha Das** said, "Two years ago, when inflation was at its peak at 7.8%, the elephant in the room was inflation. The elephant now appears to have gone out of the room for a walk in the forest." "We would like the elephant to stay in the forest. We would like inflation to align with the target on a durable basis," he added. RBI has a 4% inflation target. In Feb 2024, retail inflation stood at nearly 5.1%.

Das said inflation has come down significantly but remains above the 4% target and food inflation continues to exhibit considerable volatility impeding the ongoing dis-

Consumer Confidence Improves: Survey

One-year ahead expectations compared with current situation	January, 2024	March, 2024	Change
Economic situation	33.7	37.3	↑
Employment	34.7	37.4	↑
Price level	-71.4	-68.8	↑
Income	49.4	50.5	↑
Spending	69.2	69.6	↑
Consumer Confidence Index	123.1	125.2	↑

Positive sentiments with signs of improvement compared to last round
 Negative sentiments with signs of improvement compared to last round

Source: RBI

inflation process. He said high and persistent food inflation could unhinge anchoring of inflation expectations which is underway.

"Our ongoing effort is to ensure fuller transmission of policy actions and anchoring of household inflation expectations. The strong growth momentum, together with our GDP projections for 2024-25, give us the policy space to unwaveringly focus on price stability," said Das.

He said deflation in fuel is likely to deepen in the near term, following the cut in cooking gas prices in March.

"Notwithstanding the cut in petrol and diesel prices in mid-March, the recent uptick in crude oil prices needs to be closely monitored. Continuing geopolitical tensions also pose upside risk to commodity prices and supply chains," Das said.

Despite optimism about growth, which RBI governor projected at 7.5% for FY25, his hawkish comments on inflation (projected at 4.5% for FY25) seemed to indicate that rate cuts may be delayed. Economists are now ruling out a rate cut in the first half.

The repo rate, which was

cut to 4% in March 2022 to dampen the economic impact of the pandemic, remained unchanged until May 22, when it was hiked to 4.4% after the Ukraine invasion. Since then, it was hiked five times until it hit 6.5% in Feb 2023.

"It is the level of inflation going forward one year ahead, that is what really guides us in our journey of attaining price stability," said Das.

Like in the previous policy, the MPC decided by a 5 to 1 majority to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5%. Consequently, the standing deposit facility rate remains at 6.25%, the marginal standing facility rate remains at 6.75%, and the Bank Rate remains at 6.75%. The MPC also decided by a majority of 5 out of 6 members to remain focused on the withdrawal of accommodation. Das said that the global economy was resilient and trade growth was picking up, although slower than historical averages. He added that last-mile disinflation remained a challenge. Das said that high levels of debt in advanced economies were dormant risks.

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