

India, Russia seal deal on future Kudankulam units

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: As External affairs Minister S Jaishankar held talks with Russian deputy PM and trade minister Denis Manturov, India and Russia signed agreements to facilitate construction of future units of the Kudankulam nuclear project in Tamil Nadu. Jaishankar, who is on a 5-day visit to Russia that will see him holding talks with his counterpart Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday, described Russia as a special partner in areas like defence, space and nuclear power.

"Today, in my presence and that of Deputy PM (Denis) Manturov, we signed some very important agreements pertaining to the future units of the Kudankulam nuclear project," he said.

"Collaborations are done in areas of defence, space and nuclear energy with countries with which you have a high degree of trust,"



S Jaishankar in Moscow on Monday. He will hold talks with his counterpart Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday

he added. With India's crude imports from Russia increasing significantly, both sides expressed confidence that annual bilateral trade volume will reach \$100 billion from the present \$ 50 billion in a few years.

Jaishankar also said that the two sides by the end of January will start in-person negotiations on the free trade agreement between India and the Eurasian Eco-

nomic Zone.

"If one looks at our economy, influence, and impact on the world today, it is very different from 10 years ago and will be different 10 years later. We went on from the 10th largest economy a decade ago, to be the 5th largest now and will hopefully be the 3rd largest and beyond that, later," Jaishankar said.

Asked about the trade payment issue between Russia and India, the minister said that "in an unusual situation, we are trying to find ways by which banks deal with each other".

"People are unclear what is happening...If you don't have a full picture or you don't have confidence, people hold back. Those who have banking relationships and do business with Russia can educate people about good banks, safe routes," he said.

"We have been trying to find a solution regarding the payment problem," he said.

PM, Saudi crown prince push for W Asia peace

Focus On Maritime Security In Red Sea

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

File photo

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi discussed the West Asia situation in a phone conversation with Saudi Crown Prince and PM Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, while reviewing progress in bilateral ties. According to the Indian government, they shared deep concerns over terrorism, violence and the loss of civilian lives.

The government said Modi reiterated India's long-standing and principled position on the Israel-Palestine issue and called for continued humanitarian aid for the affected population.

"The two leaders agreed to work together for peace, security and stability in the region ... The two leaders also discussed the conflict in the Red Sea, emphasising the need for maintaining maritime security and the freedom of navigation," said an Indian readout. Modi had earlier discussed the threat to maritime security in the region from Iran-backed Houthi militants with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu.

The leaders also reviewed progress in bilateral



A file photo of PM Modi, and Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman. They exchanged views on the West Asia situation and shared concerns regarding terrorism, violence and the loss of civilian lives. The two leaders also reviewed progress in bilateral strategic partnership, following the crown prince's September visit

strategic partnership, following the state visit of the Crown Prince to India in September 2023.

"They also discussed the forward-looking bilateral partnership agenda for the future. The Prime Minister conveyed greetings to Saudi Arabia on being selected as host for Expo 2030 and FIFA Football World Cup 2034," said the government, adding that the two leaders agreed to remain in touch.

Modi later posted on X: "Held a good conversation with my Brother HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the future of Strategic Partnership between India and Saudi Arabia. We exchanged views on the West Asia situation and shared concerns regarding terrorism, violence and the loss of civilian lives. Agreed to work together for peace, security and stability in the region."

30 countries keen on partnership ties with BRICS: Lavrov

MOSCOW, Dec 26 (PTI)

RUSSIAN Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Tuesday said that 30 countries have expressed their interest in establishing partnership ties with the BRICS grouping.

Lavrov said Moscow expects a wide range of solutions to be developed ahead of the group's next summit, set to take place in the Russian city of Kazan in October next year. Addressing a session of United Russia's Commission on International Cooperation and Support for

Compatriots Abroad, Lavrov said the aspiration of many countries to become closer with the five-nation bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa is natural given that BRICS is operating on a genuinely democratic and mutually respectful basis, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

"In addition to the countries that have already joined our union, as of today, about 30 countries would like to establish partnership ties with BRICS," he said. During the 15th BRICS

summit held at Johannesburg in South Africa from June 22-24, the BRICS leaders agreed to admit Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as new members, effective January 1, 2024. "We will continue to work on BRICS bolstering its positions as one of the pillars of a multipolar world," the top Russian diplomat noted. "The theme of our watch in BRICS will be 'Strengthening Multilateralism for Equitable Global Development and Security.' Over 10 Russian cities

will host more than 200 economic, political and public events. It all will culminate with the BRICS summit in Kazan next October," he said.

"Together with our partners, we expect to develop a wide range of solutions for the top-level event, which will be related to the key areas of cooperation," Lavrov said. Various events would take place as part of preparations for the summit and on its sidelines, particularly on the BRICS Plus and Outreach platforms.

"The heads of many devel-

oping countries will attend these events, primarily our closest neighbours and allies from post-Soviet organisations," Lavrov said. The leaders of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries met for the first time in St Petersburg, Russia, on the margins of the G8 Outreach Summit in July 2006. In September 2006, the group was formalised as BRIC during the 1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which met on the sidelines of the General Debate of the UN Assembly in New York City.

New criminal justice laws to kick in only after 3-4 months

Dec '24 Targeted Timeline For Full Implementation In All UTs

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New Delhi: The three new criminal laws — Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita & Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam — notified on Monday are likely to come into force only after a few months, with the intervening period meant to prepare & equip the criminal justice system for a smooth transition from the British-era criminal codes and laws.

Sources said the date from which the new criminal codes will come into force may be notified in a month or so, but the date of enforcement could be 3-4 months thereafter. The full implementation of the laws — involving updating of criminal justice infrastructure, software, training of human resources and complete computerisation of courts — is expected to take much longer with a targeted December 2024 timeline for all Union Territories. The states may, depending on their capacity and re-

sources, indicate own timeline for full implementation of these procedures, the complete manual of which will be shared with them by Centre.

Explaining the justification for the likely gap between notifying the date of enforcement and actual enforcement, a senior officer said this will allow time for publishing of books containing the codified laws and reaching them to the various cogs in the criminal justice wheel — the law enforcement agencies right down to the beat constable, lawyers, prosecutors and all levels of the judiciary, particularly the lower judiciary. Since the numbering of sections,

After the complete implementation of the new criminal laws, disposal of any criminal case across the country will not take more than three years

list of offences and criminal justice procedures have undergone a drastic change in the new codes, those enforcing and practising criminal law will need these books for ready reference and study and consequently, a smooth switchover to the new regime.

Sources told **TOI** that various systemic changes need to be made before cops start registering FIRs as per the provisions of new criminal justice codes. Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System software will need to be updated as data relating to all FIRs are now being fed into CCTNS by over 99% of the country's police stations. Since the new

FIRs will invoke sections as per new laws — which bear little resemblance to sections in IPC, CrPC & Indian Evidence Act — CCTNS software will have to be brought in sync.

TOI has learnt that while the home ministry has the timelines prepared for all processes leading to rollout of the three laws, exact timelines will be finalised in meetings to be chaired by the home minister or home secretary over the next few weeks. Sources said the ministry will hold a meeting with publishers of law books on Wednesday to discuss the timeline for publication of the books detailing the new criminal codes and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam.

The new laws lay down the basics of creating a leakproof justice system with seamless connectivity among police station, courts, jails, labs, prosecutor's office and secretariat. After the implementation of these laws, disposal of any criminal case will not take more than three years.

POONCH AMBUSH

Search ops to track down terrorists enter sixth day

POONCH/JAMMU, Dec 26 (PTI)

BATTLING difficult terrains and dense forests, security forces continued to carry out cordon and search operations for the sixth consecutive day on Tuesday to track down the terrorists behind the ambush that left four soldiers dead in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch last week, officials said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is likely to visit ground zero on Wednesday with top Army and civilian officials monitoring the situation in Poonch in view of the terrorist attack which was followed by the death of three civilians in the area, official sources said.

Over 30 suspects have been questioned during the past few days and several of them have been released, they said. "The cordon and search operation is going on to track down the terrorists involved in the ambush on Army vehicles," a senior official told PTI.

The official said that the operation includes sniffer dogs, surveillance equipment and aerial mechanisms. Additional forces have been deployed to plug seven infiltration routes amid area domination operations in the area, he said.

Operations are being carried out cautiously as there are dense forests, deep gorges and caves, official sources said. Mobile Internet services will remain suspended in Rajouri and Poonch for the fourth day in a row.

The Defence Minister is likely to visit the area on Wednesday and hold meetings with top commanders on the measures being taken to deal with the situation, they said.

His visit follows Chief of Army staff (CoAS) General Manoj Pande's visit to ground zero in Poonch on Monday.

ARMS RECOVERED FROM 3 PERSONS DURING SEARCH OPERATION IN PULWAMA, ARRESTED:

SECURITY forces have arrested three persons and recovered weapons from them in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir, the Army said on Tuesday.

"Based on specific intelligence inputs, a Joint Cordon & Search Operation (CASO) was launched by Indian Army and Jammu and Kashmir Police at Panzu and Gamiraj in Pulwama on 25 December, 2023. Three suspected individuals have been apprehended with recovery of 2 pistols and other warlike stores," Srinagar-based Chinar Corps posted on X.

Nuclear weapons shipments from Russia completed: Belarus leader

TALLINN, Dec 26 (AP)

THE President of Belarus said on Monday that Russia has completed its shipments of tactical nuclear weapons to his country, an initiative that raised strong concerns in neighbouring Poland and elsewhere in the region.

President Alexander Lukashenko said at a meeting of a Moscow-led economic bloc in St. Petersburg that the shipments were completed in October, but he did not give details of how many weapons were sent or where they have been deployed. Tactical nuclear weapons, which are intended for use on the battlefield, have a short range and a low yield compared with much more powerful nuclear warheads fitted to long-range missiles. Russia said it would maintain control over those it sends to Belarus.

Israel will pay heavy price for killing General Mousavi: Iran President

TEL AVIV, Dec 26 (IANS)

IRANIAN President Ebrahim Raisi has said that Israel will pay a heavy price for killing Brigadier General Razi Mousavi of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in an airstrike in Syria. "Without a doubt, this action is another sign of frustration, helplessness, and incapacity of the usurping Zionist regime in the region," Iranian President said, in a press statement.

Brigadier General Mousavi was killed in an airstrike in Sayeda Zeinab area near Damascus, the capital of Syria.

Mousavi -- a high ranking officer in IRGC -- was coordinating Iran's military operations in Syria. Israel has alleged that Brigadier General Mousavi was responsible for coordinating the supply of arms and

materials to Hezbollah. However, Israel Defence Forces (IDF) Spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari -- during a press conference -- did not comment on the killing of Mousavi. Israelis allege that Iran and its IRGC is supporting Hamas and Hezbollah who work in coordination for attacking Israel.

Meanwhile, Iran Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in a social media post, "Tel Aviv faces a tough countdown."

Though Iran's official news agency IRNA didn't provide other details about the attack, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the Israeli military targeted Mousavi after he entered a farm in the area, which allegedly was one of several offices for Hezbollah.

Biden orders strike on Iranian-aligned group

- 3 US troops injured in drone attack in northern Iraq
- Iranian-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups claimed credit for the attack

WASHINGTON, Dec 26 (AP)

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden ordered the US military to carry out retaliatory airstrikes against Iranian-backed militia groups after three US service-members were injured in a drone attack in northern Iraq.

National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said one of the US troops suffered critical injuries

in the attack that occurred earlier on Monday.

The Iranian-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, under an umbrella of Iranian-backed militants, claimed credit for the attack that utilised a one-way attack drone.

Biden, who is spending Christmas at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, was alerted about the attack by White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan shortly after it occurred on Monday and ordered the Pentagon and his top national security aides to prepare response options to the attack on an air base used by American troops in Erbil.

Sullivan consulted with Defence Secretary Lloyd

Austin. Biden's deputy national security advisor, Jon Finer, was with the President at Camp David and convened top aides to review options, according to a US official, who was not authorised to comment publicly and requested

anonymity. Within hours, Biden convened his national security team for a call in which Austin and Gen. CQ Brown, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefed Biden on the response options. Biden opted to target three locations used by Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, the official said.

The US strikes were carried out at about 4:45 am on Tuesday in Iraq, less than 13 hours after the US personnel were attacked.

Missile destroyer

Imphal commissioned into Navy

MUMBAI, Dec 26 (PTI)

STEALTH guided missile destroyer Imphal, which has an ability to fire extended range supersonic BrahMos missile, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in

Capable of firing an extended range supersonic BrahMos missile, INS Imphal is 1st warship to be named after a city from N-E India

Mumbai on Tuesday. Apart from Singh, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde attended the event that marked the formal induction into the Navy of the third of four 'Visakhapatnam' class destroyers, indigenously designed by the Navy's in-house organisation, Warship Design Bureau, and constructed by defence PSU Mazagon Dock Limited, Mumbai.

INS Imphal is the first warship to have been named after a city from North-East India.

INS Imphal was delivered to the Navy on October 20 after
(Contd on page 5)



Will find attackers even from depths of seas and take strict action: Rajnath

MUMBAI, Dec 26 (PTI)

THE Indian Government has taken serious cognisance of the recent attacks on merchant Navy ships MV Chem Pluto and MV Sai Baba, and it will take strict action against those behind the attacks by finding them even from the "depths of seas", Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Tuesday.

Speaking after the commissioning of stealth guided missile destroyer INS
(Contd on page 5)

Vinesh Phogat to return Khel Ratna, Arjuna Award

NEW DELHI, Dec 26 (PTI)

VINESH Phogat on Tuesday decided to return her Khel Ratna and Arjuna award to the Prime Minister, saying such honours have become meaningless when wrestlers are struggling badly for justice, aggravating the crisis that has gripped the sport.

Phogat, the two-time World Championship medal winner, announced her decision in her letter penned for Prime Minister Narendra



Modi.

In the letter posted on X, Phogat said their lives are not like those “fancy government advertisements” that talk about women empowerment and upliftment.

“The Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna and Arjuna awards don’t have any meaning in my life now. Every woman in this country wants to lead a dignified life. So PM sir I want to return my Dhyan Chand and Arjun award to you so

(Contd on page 5)