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lingering radiation.

The drone struck the radiation shelter, causing a fire that was then extinguished, Zelensky wrote on the Telegram app. "According to initial assessments, the damage to the shelter is significant," he said. Ukraine's SBU security service showed pictures of what it said was the drone, which it said had been carrying a high-explosive warhead. It said the drone was a Geran-2, the Russian name for the Iranian-designed Shahed-136. Andriy Yermak, the Ukrainian president's chief of staff, posted photos that appeared to show a small fire near the top of the shelter, known as the New Safe Confinement. Zelensky told reporters in Munich the drone had flown in below radar range, at a height of 85 metres. REUTERS

India needs to weigh pros & cons of F-35 pitch

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New Delhi: India will have to carefully evaluate US president Trump's offer of the fifth-generation F-35 fighter, even though IAF would love to grab it with both hands given the China factor, while the two countries take forward the procurement of six more P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft as well as joint production of Stryker armoured infantry combat vehicles and Javelin anti-tank guided missiles this year.

The expansive India-US defence relationship will get a further boost with PM Modi and Trump "pledging to elevate" military cooperation across air, land, sea, space and cyberspace, institute the 'Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA)', streamline defence trade and technology exchange, and sign a 10-year major defence partnership framework to renew the one inked in 2015.

The sales pitch for the F-35, which is sold only to Nato countries and close allies, however, was the key takeaway. It might just be "a proposal" at this stage with the long-drawn formal process yet to even begin, as foreign secretary Vikram Misri said, but India will have to increasingly contend with a pushy Trump,



US currently sells F-35s to mostly Nato countries

whose deal-oriented transactional approach to geopolitics is well-known.

"Starting this year, we will be increasing military sales to India by many billions of dollars. We are also paving the way to ultimately provide F-35 stealth fighters," said Trump. The joint statement also noted the US's "review of its policy on releasing fifth-generation fighters and undersea systems" to India.

The pros and cons will have to be weighed. "India will inexorably be drawn into the US's sphere of influence with the F-35 acquisition, impinging on its strategic autonomy. Why do you think successive Indian govts over the years have acquired Russian, French and other fighters but never American ones?" an official said.

If India indeed pursues the F-35 offer,

it will also have to factor in several things like the off-the-shelf price, the technologies being given, life-cycle costs, maintenance and the like, apart from the strategic benefits it can reap. Utmost care will have to be taken that India's own 5th-Gen fighter project of the advanced medium combat aircraft (AMCA), the development of which for over Rs 15,000 crore was cleared by the cabinet committee on security last March, is not adversely impacted.

The operational 5th-Gen jets currently are the American F-35 Lightning-II and F/A-22 Raptor, the Chinese Chengdu J-20 and Russian Sukhoi-57. China has deployed J-20s at its airfields facing India and is even going to soon supply a variant to Pakistan, while it also conducted maiden flights of two new 6th-Gen prototypes in Dec.

With IAF grappling with just 30 fighter squadrons when it is authorised 42.5, and HAL struggling to produce even a 4th-Gen Tejas, Indian security planners are obviously concerned. "With AMCA still at least 10-12 years away from production, IAF will obviously be deeply interested in getting two to three squadrons (36 or 54 jets) of F-35s in the interim. If you need deterrence to prevent wars, you obviously need capabilities," another official added.

Govt eyes a win-win trade deal with US

Reduction In Import Duties By Both Sides Will Help Blunt Impact Of Reciprocal Tariffs

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New Delhi: Indian govt is hopeful of working out a win-win trade deal with the US after PM Narendra Modi and US president Donald Trump signalled early Friday that a bilateral agreement will be in place by fall 2025. "If you look at our trade basket, India's exports are very different from what we import from the US. So, it will be beneficial for both the countries," a senior govt official told TOI.

An Indian official said the deal will see import duties being cut on both sides, something that will help blunt the impact of reciprocal tariffs. Besides, removing non-tariff barriers is also part of the negotiating agenda.

The said India would look to increase the import of American oil, gas and defence equipment to address Trump's concern over the trade deficit. Already, some of the concerns over tariffs on products that are of interest to the US, such as Harley Davidson bikes, bourbon whiskey and Californian wine, have sought to be addressed over the last two weeks through reduction in import duty — something that the two leaders also took note of in the joint statement released after their meeting at the White House

WORKING ON NEW STRATEGY



Going forward, there could be reduction in levies on products such as pecan nuts and some other farm products that India is importing, not necessarily from the US.

"Both sides also pledged to collaborate to enhance bilateral trade by increasing US exports of industrial goods to India and Indian exports of labour-intensive manufactured products to the US. The two sides will work together to increase trade in agricultural goods," the joint statement said.

For India, services are the other area of interest, although it is unclear if that will be part of the trade deal that is to be negotiated in next few months. Visas for Indian workers and professionals will be the other area of interest for govt, but that may be something on which Trump has domestic sensitivities.

On goods side, India will seek to push products such as textiles and leather, some of which attract duties which are as high as 40% in the US.

1,100 taken into custody in 24 hrs under Op Kavach 7.0

Crackdown On Street Peddlers And Traffickers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Around 1,100 individuals, including narco-offenders, bootleggers and many with criminal backgrounds, were taken into custody during raids in a 24-hour period conducted by Delhi Police across the city under Operation Kavach 7.0, an anti-drug trafficking campaign. In addition, 5,077 persons were questioned and released, while 1,407 violators were prosecuted under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA).

Devesh Chandra Srivastava, special commissioner of police (Crime), said the operation focused on both street-level peddlers and high-level traffickers, employing a top-down and bottom-up approach. Six operations, starting in 2023, have been conducted so far, leading to substantial drug seizures and the arrest of drug offenders.

In the latest operation, 150 police teams from all police stations and units were constituted and the raids, supervised by joint commissioners Suresh Singh and Sanjay Bhatia, commenced at 6pm on Feb 12,

concluding at 6pm on Feb 13. Ninety drug offenders were arrested in 87 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. Another 157 cases were registered under the Delhi Excise Act, resulting in 161 arrests. Further, 29 individuals were taken into custody in 27 Arms Act cases. Police also booked

5,077 LET OFF AFTER QUESTIONING

Operation Kavach targets drug traffickers across Delhi. Six operations, starting in 2023, have been conducted so far, leading to substantial drug seizures and arrest of drug offenders

Operation Kavach 7.0 conducted from Feb 12-13
150 police teams conducted raids across 784 locations in 15 Delhi districts, involving Crime Branch and Special Cell

Under custody
90 drug offenders arrested in 87 NDPS cases
157 cases registered under Delhi Excise Act; 161 arrests made
29 arrests in 27 Arms Act cases
272 booked under Sec 40 of Delhi Excise Act
909 individuals taken into preventive custody
3 held in 3 gambling cases
5,077 called for questioning, let off under Sec 65 of DP Act



SEIZURES			
553gm of heroin	43kg of ganja	199gm of cocaine	2.1 lakh alprazolam tablets
48 vehicles, including motorcycles and scooters		94 bottles and 432 cans of beer, 33,098 illicit liquor quarters, and 5 hookahs	
1 revolver and 6 country-made pistols		11 live cartridges	Surgical blade, 18 knives

₹6,400 cash

ANTI-TOBACCO ACTION 1,407 violators prosecuted within 100m of educational institutions under COTPA Act, and one arrested with 10,000 cigarette packets

272 individuals under the Delhi Excise Act and took 909 individuals into preventive custody. Three individuals were arrested in connection with three gambling cases and 48 vehicles seized in total. While 909 individuals were taken into preventive custody, 5,077 were called for questioning and let off under Section 65 of

the DP Act. Police also initiated one case under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.



From tariff tirade, Modi steers Trump to bridging trade gap

Both Sides To Work On A Deal By Nov 2025

Chidanand Rajghatta

Washington: India will buy unprecedented amounts of oil, gas, military hardware and agricultural products from US to bridge the trade gap between the two countries in return for enhanced US support for its rise through military cooperation, technology transfers in critical areas, and regional dominance, under a deal struck by PM Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump.

In four hours of talks and engagements Thursday, Modi publicly stood his ground against a rampant Trump, defusing his tirade about trade barriers with measured concessions, while maintaining he

PHOTOS: ANI

Developed India means Make India Great Again, ie 'MIGA'. When the United States and India work together, ie 'MAGA' plus 'MIGA', the 'MEGA' Partnership for prosperity is formed. And this mega spirit gives new scale and scope to our goals —PM Modi



PM Modi with US President Trump at the joint presser in White House on Thursday

- ▶ US PLANE WITH 119 DEPORTEES TO LAND TODAY, P 16
- ▶ FULL TEXT OF PM'S ANSWERS AT PRESSER, P 16

had as much right to advance India's interests as Trump had to protect American primacy.

The two leaders bought time to iron out differences and arrive at a level-playing field by agreeing to initiate talks on a bilateral trade deal by Nov. Officials said they will aim to bump up bilateral trade, cur-

rently shy of \$150 billion, to \$500 billion annually by 2030. India has a trade surplus of \$45 billion with US (it sells \$45 billion more than it buys from US), which is about one-sixth of the surplus China has with US (\$290 billion). But the US deficit is sufficient to trigger Trump, whose wrath is direc-

ted primarily at China, Canada, Mexico, and the European Union, with India suffering collateral damage.

To MAGA (make America great again), Modi responded with MIGA (make India great again), standing up to the discordant note Trump struck earlier with his insistence on reciprocal tariffs against countries, including India, which he said had the run of the American market while not providing reciprocal access to US

Despite their effusive engagement replete with mutual admiration and flattery, the issue played out at the joint White House press conference with Trump publicly excoriating India for high tariffs and trade barriers, Modi standing next to him. But the Indian PM remained cool under pressure, choosing to repeatedly emphasise the big picture.

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Saudi to host leaders of UAE, Egypt & Jordan to discuss Trump's Gaza takeover plan

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia will host leaders of four Arab countries at a summit on Feb 20 to discuss President Trump's proposal for a US takeover of Gaza, a source with knowledge of the preparations said Friday.

Leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and the UAE will attend the summit, which will take place ahead of an Arab League meeting in Cairo on Feb 27 on the same issue, the source said. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, another source said President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmud Abbas, would also attend.

Trump sparked a global outcry with his proposal for the US to take over the Gaza Strip and to move more than two million Palestinians out of the territory, citing Egypt or Jordan as possible destinations. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu has since suggested Saudi Arabia could also host Palestinians, in remarks that drew condemnation from the Arab world, but which Israeli media said was a joke.

Hamas identifies 3 hostages to be freed

Palestinian militant groups in Gaza said they would release hostages Iair Horn, US-Israeli Sagui Dekel-Chen and Russian-Israeli Alexandre Sasha Troufanov on Saturday, in accordance with the terms of the ceasefire with Israel. The announcement, after days of uncertainty about whether the ceasefire would hold, followed intense efforts by Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

A statement from PM Netanyahu's office said Israel accepted the list but that was later corrected to say Israel had received the list, which it said was a "purely factual description" that did not reflect any Israeli approach to the issue.

Hamas said Israel was expected to release 369 Palestinian prisoners in exchange. REUTERS

Arab countries have come together in a rare united front, outraged by the idea of moving Palestinians en masse. AFP

tion by granting sweeping general office's inquiry. NYT

Airbnb co-founder to take role in DOGE?

Joe Gebbia Used To Be Dem Donor, Had Given Hillary, Biden \$200,000 Each

Washington: One of Elon Musk's closest friends, a billionaire co-founder of Airbnb, is taking a role in President Trump's administration to help Musk carry out his drive to slash the federal bureaucracy, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

Joe Gebbia, the Airbnb co-founder, is a board member at Tesla who lives in Austin, Texas, where Musk, Tesla's CEO, keeps a large compound. He is planning to start shortly in the federal govt as part of Musk's DOGE team, according to the person with knowledge of the matter. It is not clear what precisely Gebbia will do or how formal his role will be.

Many members of Musk's govt-overhaul effort float among agencies depending on



Gebbia's net worth approaches \$9bn

the day's tasks. Many of them consider their centre of gravity to be the office of personnel management or the general services administration.

Early Friday, Gebbia arrived at OPM's downtown Washington headquarters in a black SUV with a three-person security detail. He declined to comment as he was escorted inside by an OPM official and one of his bodyguards.

Musk and his allies have taken over the US Digital Service, now renamed the United States DOGE Service. The agency was established in 2014 to fix the federal govt's online services. Many of his foot soldiers are young software engineers with no govt experience

who have parachuted into federal agencies seeking to overhaul or even dismantle them.

Gebbia was until recently a Democratic donor, spending more than \$200,000 each to boost Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden in the 2016 and 2020 general elections, and \$20,000 to support Biden's reelection run.

Gebbia has said his politics have shifted toward Republicans, in major part because of the advocacy of Robert F Kennedy Jr, whom Gebbia considers a political ally. Gebbia attended Kennedy's confirmation hearing last month, writing on the social platform X that morning that it was a "big day ahead for the future of health in America."

Gebbia did not immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday evening.

In a post on X the day before Trump's inauguration, Gebbia said he had voted for Democrats dating back to Al Gore in 2000 but acknowledged supporting Trump in Nov. NYT

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