

European leaders support Zelenskyy

White House supports Trump after their spat

■ By Yoshita Singh

NEW YORK, Mar 1 (PTI)

UKRAINE'S European partners as well as other global leaders rallied behind President Volodymyr Zelenskyy while the White House touted support for President Donald Trump's "American First strength" after a remarkable showdown in the Oval Office between the two leaders.

Zelenskyy departed the White House on Friday after an unprecedented verbal
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Thank you America, thank you POTUS: Zelenskyy

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, Mar 1 (PTI)

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has thanked US President Donald Trump and the country for its support after departing the White House following an unprecedented showdown in the Oval



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INDIA to remain fastest growing major economy with 6.5% growth in FY26: IMF

■ By Nivedita Khandekar
NEW YORK, Mar 1 (PTI)

MULTILATERAL financing agency International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said that India will retain its position as the fastest-growing major economy by clocking a GDP growth of 6.5 per cent in 2025-26, on the back of robust private investment and macroeconomic stability.

India's strong economic performance, the IMF said, provides an opportunity for the country to advance critical and challenging structural reforms to realise the ambition

of becoming an advanced economy by 2047.

"Real GDP is expected to grow at 6.5 per cent in 2024-25 and 2025-26, supported by robust growth in private consumption on the back of sustained macroeconomic and financial stability.

According to the second advance estimate released by the Indian Government, the country's economy is expected to clock a growth rate of 6.5 per cent during 2024-25. "Headline inflation is expected to converge to target as food price shocks wane," the IMF said after Article IV consul-

tations with India.

The IMF statement also underlined the need for deeper implementation of structural reforms to boost private investment and employment, and push growth.

"...Comprehensive structural reforms are crucial to create high-quality jobs, invigorate investment, and unleash higher potential growth. Efforts should focus on implementing labour market reforms, strengthening human capital, and supporting greater participation of women in the labour force," it added.

Boosting private investment and FDI, the IMF statement said,

was vital and would require stable policy frameworks, greater ease of doing business, governance reforms, and increased trade integration. These would include both tariff and non-tariff reduction measures.

It further said that despite recent moderation, India's economic growth has remained robust, with GDP growth of 6 per cent y-on-y in the first half of 2024-25. Inflation has broadly declined within the tolerance band of the Reserve Bank (of 2 to 6 per cent), though food price fluctuations have created some volatility, the statement said.

Taiwan sanctions 7 Chinese varsities

TAIPEI, Mar 1 (IANS)

TAIWAN has sanctioned seven universities, dubbed the “seven sons of China’s national defence,” that pose a security threat.

The Ministry of Education, Taiwan, stated that these universities were founded by the Chinese Ministry of National Defence before they were transferred to the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Taiwan’s Minister of Education, Cheng Ying-Yao said, “Taiwanese universities and research institutions are forbidden from engaging in any academic activities or exchanges with seven Chinese universities to protect technology.”

Kurdish militants declare truce in 40-year insurgency in Turkey

ISTANBUL, Mar 1 (AP)

KURDISH militants who have waged a 40-year insurgency in Turkey declared a ceasefire on Saturday in what could mark a significant boost to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Government, two days after their imprisoned leader called for the group to disarm.

The announcement by the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, comes against the backdrop of fundamental changes in the region, including the reconfiguration of power in neighbouring Syria after the toppling of President Bashar Assad, the

weakening of the Hezbollah militant movement in Lebanon and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The conflict between Turkey and the PKK has led to tens of thousands of deaths since it began in 1984. The ceasefire is the first sign of a breakthrough since peace talks between the PKK and Ankara broke down in the summer of 2015. The PKK declaration was published by the Firat News Agency, a media outlet close to the group, on Saturday. It referred to the insurgents' leader, Abdullah Ocalan, who has been imprisoned by Turkey since 1999. "We declare a ceasefire effective today to pave the way

for the implementation of Leader Apo's call for peace and democratic society. None of our forces will take armed action unless attacked," it said, referring to Ocalan by his nickname.

On Thursday, a delegation of Kurdish politicians announced Ocalan's call for the PKK to lay down its arms and disband after visiting him on his island prison.

In its statement, the PKK's executive committee said Ocalan's call indicated that a "new historical process has begun in Kurdistan and the Middle East." Kurdistan refers to the parts of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran inhabited by Kurds.

'Iran needs to boost defence capability to counter Israel'

TEHRAN, Mar 1 (IANS)

ESMAEIL Baghaei, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, has said it is a "responsible and essential" move for Tehran to maximise its defence capabilities owing to Israel's threats.

He made the remarks in a post on the social media platform X while reacting to recent comments by Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, who had claimed that "Iran has enriched enough uranium for a couple of bombs," and threatened the country with a military action to stop its nuclear programme, as well as the West's constant criticism of Tehran's efforts to increase its defence power.

Baghaei said Israel's Foreign Minister and other officials "keep threatening Iran with military action while the West continues to blame Iran for its defence capability."

He described the West's criticism as "outrageous and irrational," adding, "In a region scourged by an occupying entity (Israel) that is long addicted to aggression and lawless behaviour, it is only responsible and essential to maximise our defence capabilities."

In an interview with Politico in Brussels, which was published on Wednesday, the Israeli Foreign Minister said Iran was "playing with ways" to weaponise its enriched nuclear material.

11-member B'desh team to visit India for meeting over Ganga Water Treaty

DHAKA, Mar 1 (PTI)

AN 11-member Bangladeshi delegation will travel to India on Monday for a meeting regarding the Ganga Water Treaty, which is due for renewal in 2026.

India and Bangladesh are set to hold the 86th meeting of the joint committee of technical experts next week regarding the renewal of the 30-year-old treaty for sharing the waters of the trans-boundary river.

"The Bangladeshi delegation, led by Muhammad Abul Hossen, member of the Joint River Commission (JRC), will reach Kolkata on March 3 and immediately

leave on a two-day visit to the joint observation site on the Ganges at Farakka until the morning of March 5," The Daily Star newspaper said here on Saturday. The delegation will return to Kolkata for a two-day meeting under the aegis of the India-Bangladesh Joint River Commission on March 6-7, according to a letter written by RR Sambharia, senior joint commissioner (FM).

Abul Hossen told the newspaper that the joint river commission sits once a year to discuss the cross-boundary river.

According to the Ministry of Jal Shakti, India and Bangladesh

share 54 rivers. The Joint Rivers Commission of India and Bangladesh was constituted in 1972 as a bilateral mechanism to address issues of mutual interest on common / border / trans-boundary rivers.

The Ganga Water Treaty was signed on December 12, 1996 by the then Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina. During Hasina's last visit to India in June – weeks before her regime was toppled in August 2024 – the two sides announced that technical negotiations had begun for the renewal of the 1996 Treaty.

Goyal to visit Washington for trade talks from Mar 3

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (PTI)

COMMERCE and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will visit Washington next week as India, and the US are planning to negotiate a bilateral trade agreement, an official said. The visit will start from March 3 and the Minister is expected to be in the US till Friday, the official added. During the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, India and the US announced their commitment to more than double the two-way commerce to USD 500 billion by 2030 and negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025.

Goyal is likely to hold talks with US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick during the visit. The commerce ministry has already started engagements with different departments on the India-US trade aspects and related developments.

The proposed agreement is an opportunity to boost bilateral trade and investments between the two countries amid threat of US President Donald Trump, to impose higher tariffs on Indian goods. Tariffs are import duties imposed and collected by Government and paid by the

companies to bring foreign goods into the country.

The commerce ministry takes views of all ministries concerned on proposed trade agreements.

The nature of the agreement would be decided by both sides.

Goyal has earlier stated that the two countries can offer concessions and duty reductions, as their economies complement each other. Normally in a free trade agreement, two trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments.

During the first term of US President Donald Trump, the two countries had discussed a mini-trade deal, but it was shelved by the Joe Biden administration as they were not in favour of such pacts. In 2023, US-India bilateral trade in goods and services stood at USD 190.08 billion (USD 123.89 billion in goods and USD 66.19 billion in services trade). That year, India's merchandise exports to the US stood at USD 83.77 billion, while imports were USD 40.12 billion, leaving a trade gap of USD 43.65 billion in favour of India. The country's services export to America was USD 36.33 bn in 2023, while imports were aggregated at USD 29.86 billion.

Shah directs security forces to ensure free movement of people in Manipur

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (PTI)

UNION Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday directed security forces to ensure free movement of people on all routes in Manipur from March 8 and also called for strict action against those creating obstructions.

The direction was given here by Shah at a high-level meeting where the security situation of Manipur was discussed threadbare. The order bears significance as travel through the areas inhabited by Imphal valley-based Meiteis and neighbouring hills based Kukis was totally prohibited since ethnic violence broke out between the two communities in May 2023.

While Kukis travel mostly



Union Home Minister Amit Shah chairs a meeting to review security situation in Manipur, in New Delhi, on Saturday. (PTI)

through Mizoram to go outside the state, the Meiteis don't go to the hills dominated by the Kukis.

This confidence building step came 10 days after Governor Ajay

Kumar Bhalla ordered those holding illegal and looted arms to surrender before the security posts.

Chairing the review meeting,

Shah also said the Centre remains fully committed to restoring lasting peace in the state and is providing all necessary assistance in this regard.

The Home Minister directed that free movement of people should be ensured on all roads of Manipur from March 8, according to an official statement. He also said that strict action should be taken against those creating obstructions on the roads. Those who attended the meeting included Governor Bhalla, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka, Deputy Chief of Army Staff and Commander of the Army's Eastern Command among others.