

# India sends request to US for Bofors case info

## Seeks Details On Alleged Bribe From Pvt Sleuth

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**New Delhi:** India has sent a judicial request to the United States, seeking crucial information in connection with the Rs 64-crore Bofors case, potentially marking the revival of the probe into the scandal related to the purchase of 155mm field artillery guns from Sweden under the Congress govt led by Rajiv Gandhi in the late 1980s.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) sent a letter rogatory (LR), issued by a special court, to the US justice department a few days ago, sources told **TOI**. The agency has sought case details which Michael Hershman, the head of US-based private detective firm Fair-

### LENS ON 40-YR-OLD SCANDAL

**1986** | India signed ₹1,437cr deal with Swedish arms company AB Bofors for **400 155mm field Howitzer guns for the Army**

**1987** | Swedish radio channel alleged Bofors **paid ₹64cr bribe** to politicians, defence personnel to secure the deal

**1990** | FIR lodged by CBI

**1999, 2000** | Chargesheets filed. Italian businessman **Ottavio Quattrocchi**, who



allegedly served as conduit for bribes, named

**2004** | Rajiv Gandhi **cleared**

**2005** | CBI case **quashed** by HC

**2011** | Quattrocchi **discharged from case**

fax, had regarding the kick-backs that Swedish arms manufacturer A B Bofors allegedly paid to bag the order for 400 howitzers from India.

In 2017, Hershman had claimed that then PM Rajiv Gandhi was "furious" when he had found a Swiss bank account 'Mont Blanc', where the bribe money from Bofors had allegedly been parked. Hershman had also claimed that the then govt had sabo-

tagged his probe.

The agency had first approached the court in Delhi in Oct, informing it about their plan to seek details from the US authorities. The move was prompted by Hershman, who shot into prominence in political circles because of his involvement with the Bofors case, agreeing to cooperate with Indian agencies.

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# Zelensky offers truce as Trump cuts military aid

## Praises US Prez, Expresses Regret Over WH Fiasco

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

US President Donald Trump has pulled the plug on military assistance to Ukraine, abandoning a country Washington poured more than \$100 billion into for its defence against Russia.

As the decision sent shockwaves across Europe, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky tried to placate Trump, proposing a new framework for a partial ceasefire with Russia, posting on X that Kiev would be willing to

## US MAY LIFT SOME RUSSIA SANCTIONS

➤ US has given Ukraine more than \$180bn in assistance since Russia launched all-out war on Feb 24, 2022, including over \$66.5bn in military aid

➤ US officials chose to use the words 'suspended' and 'paused' for the aid halt, suggesting that matters could be salvaged if Zelensky sued for peace



➤ US analysts say Zelensky tested Trump's patience by insisting that European Nato partners gave Ukraine 'a lot', contrary to Trump's claim that US was shouldering much of the burden

➤ US may lift some sanctions on Russia, a day after Pentagon suspended offensive cyber operations



## ▶ AID CUT LEAVES EUROPE VULNERABLE, INSIDE JACKET

release prisoners and agree to a truce that would ban long-range attacks on civilian and energy infrastructure.

Zelensky said the Oval Office blowup with Trump was "regrettable", adding that he

stands ready to work under the latter's "strong leadership" to get a lasting peace. Kiev is also ready to sign a deal on rare earths and security with DC.

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# ICJ elects Japanese Judge Iwasawa Yuji as new President

THE HAGUE, Mar 4 (IANS)

JAPANESE Judge Iwasawa Yuji has been elected as the new President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague,



Netherlands. He will succeed former ICJ President Nawaf Salam, who resigned in January before his term expired.

The ICJ announced on Monday that Iwasawa Yuji had been elected as President of the Court by his fellow judges. President Iwasawa has been a Judge of the Court since June 22, 2018. Before joining the Court, President Iwasawa was a Professor of

International Law at the University of Tokyo and Chairperson of the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

He became the second Japanese national to have taken the Court's top post, following Hisashi Owada, a former Japanese judge who served as the President of the ICJ from 2009 to 2012.

Speaking to NHK World Japan, Iwasawa said that he wants to contribute to the ICJ's efforts to promote the rule of law and peaceful solutions to disputes.

The President and Vice-President of ICJ are elected by the members of the Court every three years by secret ballot. An absolute majority is required, and there are no conditions of nationality. The President and Vice-President may be re-elected. The President leads all meetings of the Court, overseeing its operations and administration with the help of a Budgetary and Administrative Committee, as well as other committees made up of Court members. In the case of a tie during judicial deliberations, the President has the authority to cast a deciding vote.

# Indian envoy to Iran meets Afghan counterpart in Tehran to boost ties

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Indian ambassador to Iran Gaurav Shresth met his Afghanistan counterpart Fazl Haqqani in Tehran, in the latest engagement between India and the Taliban to carry forward bilateral cooperation. While India hasn't formally recognised the govt in Kabul, it has been working to step up its engagement with the Taliban as evident from the recent meeting that foreign secretary Vikram Misri had with acting Taliban foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi.

The Afghan media reported Tuesday that in the meeting in

Tehran, officials focused on expanding cooperation in areas of exports and imports through the Chabahar port in Iran, which has continued to facilitate trade and commerce between India and Afghanistan.

India's development partnership with Afghanistan includes more than 500 projects spread across each of the 34 provinces of the country in critical areas of power, water supply, road connectivity, healthcare, education, agriculture and capacity building. India's approach to Afghanistan continues to be guided by its historical relations and friendship with its people, according to the govt.

# Minus US' military teeth, Europe vulnerable to Russia

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Europe is in a fix. As European leaders scramble after the blow-up between US President Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky last week, they are faced with the grim realisation they cannot currently deter — let alone fight — Russia without the American security umbrella that has been in place since the end of WWII.

Any peace plan by countries like the UK and France to help Ukraine seems untenable without adequate security guarantees being provided by the US. But Trump has now even suspended military aid to Ukraine, which accounted for almost half such assistance Kyiv was getting, in a move that obviously has been welcomed by Russia. Enmeshed in the debili-

tating and costly conflict, Russia of course wants to seize this godsend opportunity, the first such one it has got since invading Ukraine in Feb 2022. Amid the ongoing geopolitical upheaval, China, too, is waiting to see if it can exploit the situation.

European countries may be cranking up their defence budgets but they simply do not currently have the military capabilities on their own to stop Russia in its tracks. Over-dependence on the US for decades has left Europe weak in terms of military teeth on several fronts like air defence and long-range ballistic missiles as well as requisite force-enablers like space-based ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance), command and control, satellite communications and the like.

"India needs to learn a lesson from all this. It will have to deter, and if required fight, its

**A top Indian military officer said there was a lesson for India to learn: Delhi will have to deter, and if required fight, its adversaries, especially China, largely on its own'**

adversaries, especially China, largely on its own. No one will come rushing to our aid in a crunch situation. And if someone does, it will extract great concessions or costs," a top Indian military officer said.

As the unquestioned Nato leader with an annual defence expenditure of almost \$1 trillion, the US has over 80,000 combat-ready soldiers deployed in Europe along with heavy weaponry like tanks, armoured vehicles, air defence missile systems, fighter jets, warships

and the like as well as around 100 tactical nuclear bombs. While European countries collectively do have over 1.5 million troops, they would require at least 2,00,000 more for self-defence if the US withdraws its soldiers, as per one estimate.

Then there is military hardware and software. Take, for instance, the manufacture of advanced multi-role fighters. Roughly around 600 Eurofighter Typhoons (by a consortium of the UK, Germany, Italy and Spain), 300 Swedish JAS 39 Gripen and 260 French Rafale jets, which are all 4.5-plus generation jets, have been built over the last 25 years or so. The US, in turn, has produced around 1,100 of the world's most advanced fifth-generation F-35 Lightning-II stealth fighters, apart from 195 of the same generation F-22 'Raptors', in last 10 years. The US, of course, has also pro-

duced over 4,600 variants of the F-16s and over 2,000 of the F/A-18s. There is as yet no European substitute for F-35, which several European countries like the UK, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland and Poland have inducted or ordered.

Ukraine has managed to protect its people in no small measure with the help of American Patriot and NASAMS advanced air defence systems and stall deeper Russian advances with long range weapons like the high-mobility artillery rocket systems (HIMARS), the ATACM supersonic tactical ballistic missiles and around 4.5 million rounds of artillery ammunition, among others. Now, Europe may well need to provide military aid and a security umbrella to Ukraine solely by itself. But it will take a lot of doing, if at all it's possible.

# Trudeau says Trump wants Canada's eco to 'collapse' to make annexation 'easier'

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Washington has racked up a record trade deficit of \$1.2 trillion, importing for its consumption-addicted people more than it exports to the world. Trump wants major trading partners to either buy more American goods and products or return to the US the manufacturing mojo it has lost over the years.

India, a relatively minor US trading partner, has so far escaped being singled out for additional tariffs although Trump has said the US would impose reciprocal duty on every country. The US stock market, Trump's favourite metric of how well the economy is doing, took a beating, with all three indices, the Dow, Nasdaq, and S&P plunging sharply on opening trade.

Trump has repeatedly claimed tariffs will make the US richer and return manufacturing to the country, while most experts reckon it will also raise prices of many goods and make life difficult for Americans, even as it hurts Washington's major trading partners.

Nearly 80% of Mexico's exports go to the US and the tariffs are expected to push the country into a recession. On the flip side, Americans will be pay more for fruits and vegetables, including the much-loved avocado, which alone accounts for \$3 billion of the \$46 billion of agricultural products Mexico exports to the US.

Canada too exports grain,

livestock and meats, poultry and energy to the US, and Canadian leaders were particularly vehement lashing out at Washington. "Today, the US launched a trade war against Canada: their closest partner and ally—their closest friend. Canadians are reasonable, but we will not back down from a fight. Not when our country is at stake," PM Justin Trudeau said. He slammed the tariffs as "a very dumb thing to do", and



said Trump was seeking to collapse Canada's economy to make it easier for the US to annex his country. "This is a time to hit back hard and to demonstrate that a fight with Canada will have no winners."

Reacting to Trudeau's comment, Trump said in a post: "Please explain to Governor Trudeau, of Canada, that when he puts on a Retaliatory Tariff on the US, our Reciprocal Tariff will immediately increase by a like amount!"

Mexico too has been offended by the Trump White House alleging that its officials have ties with drug traffickers, a charge President Claudia Sheinbaum said is "offensive, defamatory and baseless".

China is in a different category, but retaliatory tariffs announced by Beijing are expected to increase prices of electronic goods, including TVs, laptops, cell phones, video game consoles and monitors, as also home appliances. The US also imports almost all the toys and shoes sold in America, mostly from China.

# Beijing retaliates with tariffs of up to 15% on US farm exports

President Trump launched a trade war Tuesday against America's three biggest trading partners, drawing immediate retaliation from Mexico, Canada and China. Just after midnight, US imposed 25% taxes, or tariffs, on Mexican and Canadian imports, though he limited the levy to 10% on Canadian energy. Trump also doubled the tariff he slapped last month on Chinese products to 20%.

Beijing retaliated with tariffs of up to 15% on a wide array of US farm exports. It also expanded the number of US companies subject to export controls and other restrictions by about two dozen.

Canadian PM Trudeau said his country would plaster tariffs on more than \$100 billion of American goods over the course of 21 days.

President Claudia Sheinbaum said Mexico will impose its own retaliatory tariffs. She said will announce the products Mexico will target on Sunday in a public event in Mexico City, perhaps with the delay indicating Mexico still hopes to de-escalate the trade war. AP

## Warren Buffett says tariffs an act of war

Warren Buffett, the famed investor who runs the sprawling conglomerate Berkshire Hathaway, described tariffs as "an act of war" in an interview with CBS that aired on Sunday. "Over time they're attacks on goods," Buffett said, responding to a question about their inflationary impact, suggesting that consumers will face higher prices as a result. "I mean, the tooth fairy doesn't pay them," he said. The rebuke of Trump's tariff plans came just before sweeping tariffs on Canada and Mexico went into effect.

Berkshire Hathaway has recently built up a large investment in treasury bills, govt debt that's a less risky alternative to corporate bonds and stocks. "You always have to ask that question in economics: And then what?" Buffett said. "Prices will be higher 10 years from now, 20 years from now, 30 years from now." NYT