

# Sagar to Mahasagar: India upgrades its ties with Mauritius

Sachin.Parashar  
@timesofindia.com

India and Mauritius upgraded their ties to an enhanced strategic partnership as PM Modi held formal talks with his counterpart, Navinchandra Ramgoolam, reaffirming commitment to a free, open and secure Indian Ocean and pledging full support for the security of Mauritius's exclusive economic zone, including through deployment of ships and aircraft.

Modi also advanced the vision of 'Mahasagar' (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) for the Global South, 10 years after he



PM Modi with Mauritian PM Ramgoolam & President Gokhool after receiving the highest civilian honour of Mauritius | P 14

announced India's 'Vision Sagar' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) from the same strategically located Indian Ocean country that, he said, connects India to the wider Global South.

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# US pushes Russia to accept its truce plan 'unconditionally'

## BALL NOW IN MOSCOW'S COURT

After more than eight hours of negotiations with Ukrainian officials in Jeddah on Tuesday, US secretary of state Marco Rubio said the US would take the jointly signed offer to Russia, and that the 'ball is in Moscow's court'. A look at what they agreed on:



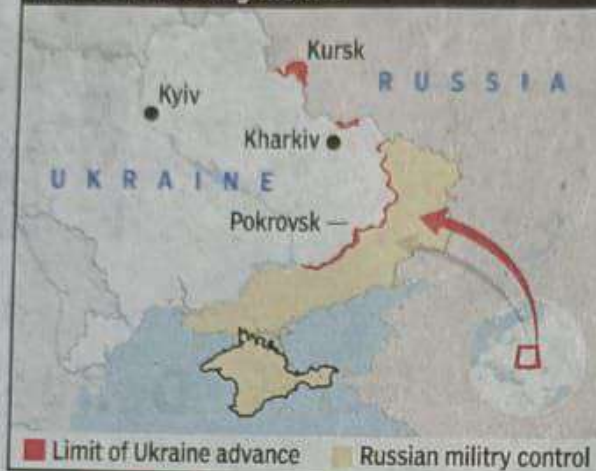
### CEASEFIRE

Ukraine expresses readiness to 'enact an immediate, interim 30-day ceasefire', which can be extended by mutual agreement of the parties

### SECURITY AID

US lifts pause on intelligence sharing, resumes security aid to Ukraine

### Mar 2025: Tracking the war



■ Limit of Ukraine advance ■ Russian military control

**MINERALS** The two countries agree to conclude as soon as possible a deal for Ukraine's mineral resources. It was thrown into limbo after the Trump-Zelensky spat in the White House on Feb 28

### WHAT'S NOT THERE?

#### SECURITY GUARANTEES

The phrase was absent from the joint statement. It's a key demand of Zelensky's that the US would provide it with a commitment to protect it if Russia were to renege on any ceasefire or peace deal

#### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The agreement is subject to acceptance and concurrent implementation by Russia.

**Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff plans to visit Moscow this week to meet Putin.** Trump himself said that he might speak with Putin in the coming days

By signalling its openness to a ceasefire, Ukraine has handed the Kremlin a difficult challenge at a time when the Russian military has the upper hand in the war. Should Moscow accept a truce and abandon hopes of making new gains, or should it reject the offer and risk derailing a cautious rapprochement with Washington? President Putin has repeatedly ruled out a temporary break in hostilities, saying it would only benefit Ukraine and its Western allies by letting them replenish their arsenals. He has insisted Moscow wants a comprehensive agreement that would ensure a lasting settlement.

The Kremlin responded

cautiously to the news of Ukraine accepting the US-proposed truce during Tuesday's talks in Saudi Arabia, saying that it needs to know details of the discussions before expressing its view.

The careful approach reflects Putin's awareness of the risk that a blunt rejection of the offer could upset tentative efforts to normalise Russia-US relationship.

Observers say that instead of an outright rejection, Putin will likely propose linking the truce to certain conditions that would protect Moscow's interests. The Russian military held the battlefield initiative last year, making slow but steady gains along several sections of the 1,000km frontline. The US, meanwhile, res-

tarted supplies after Ukraine agreed to the truce proposal at talks in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. Secretary of state Marco Rubio said the United States was now seeking Moscow's full agreement to the proposal, without attaching any of its own demands. "That's what we want to know — if they're prepared to do it unconditionally," Rubio said.

President Donald Trump said he hopes Putin will agree to the US proposal. "I hope he's going to have a ceasefire," Trump told reporters at the White House.

Earlier, Russian news agencies reported that the heads of the CIA and Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency had held their first phone call in several years. AGENCIES

Ukraine set to lose Kursk

# IAF to get desi transportable radars after ₹2,906 crore deal

**New Delhi:** The defence ministry on Wednesday inked a ₹2,906 crore contract for procurement of 18 'Ashwini' low-level transportable radars (LLTRs) for the IAF, as part of the ongoing drive to strengthen indigenous military capabilities.

The contract was inked with defence PSU Bharat Electronics Ltd, in the presence of defence secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, for the LLTRs designed and developed by Electronics & Radar Development Establishment of DRDO. This is the first time

that IAF will induct indigenous LLTRs instead of imported ones.

"The Ashwini LLTR is an active electronically scanned phased array radar based on state-of-the-art solid-state technology. The radar is capable of tracking aerial targets from high-speed fighters to slow-moving targets such as UAVs or drones, and helicopters," a MoD official said. "The programme is a major step towards achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing by reducing dependency on foreign companies." TNN

# Trump's 25% tariffs on all steel, aluminium imports go into effect

WASHINGTON, Mar 12 (AP)

PRESIDENT Donald Trump officially increased tariffs on all steel and aluminium imports to 25% on Wednesday, promising that the taxes would help create US factory jobs at a time when his seesawing tariff threats are jolting the stock market and raising fears of an economic slowdown.

Trump removed all exemptions from his 2018 tariffs on the metals, in addition to increasing the tariffs on aluminium from 10%. His moves, based off a February directive, are part of a broader effort to disrupt and transform global commerce.

The US President has separate tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China, with plans to also tax



imports from the European Union, Brazil and South Korea by charging "reciprocal" rates starting on April 2.

The EU announced its own countermeasures on Wednesday. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that as the United States was "applying tariffs worth 28 billion dollars, we are responding with countermea-

asures worth 26 billion euros," or about \$28 billion. Those measures, which cover not just steel and aluminium products, but also textiles, home appliances and agricultural goods, are due to take effect on April 1. Trump told CEOs in the Business Roundtable on Tuesday that the tariffs were causing companies to invest in US factories. The 8% drop in the S&P 500 stock index

over the past month on fears of deteriorating growth appears unlikely to dissuade him, as Trump argued that higher tariff rates would be more effective at bringing back factories.

"The higher it goes, the more likely it is they're going to build," Trump told the group. "The biggest win is if they move into our country and produce jobs. That's a bigger win than the tariffs themselves, but the tariffs are going to be throwing off a lot of money to this country." Trump on Tuesday threatened to put tariffs of 50% on steel and aluminium from Canada but he chose to stay with the 25% rate after the province of Ontario suspended plans to put a surcharge on electricity sold to Michigan, Minnesota and New York.

# WH throws bourbon brickbat at India

## Ignores New Delhi's Duty Cut From 150% To 100%

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

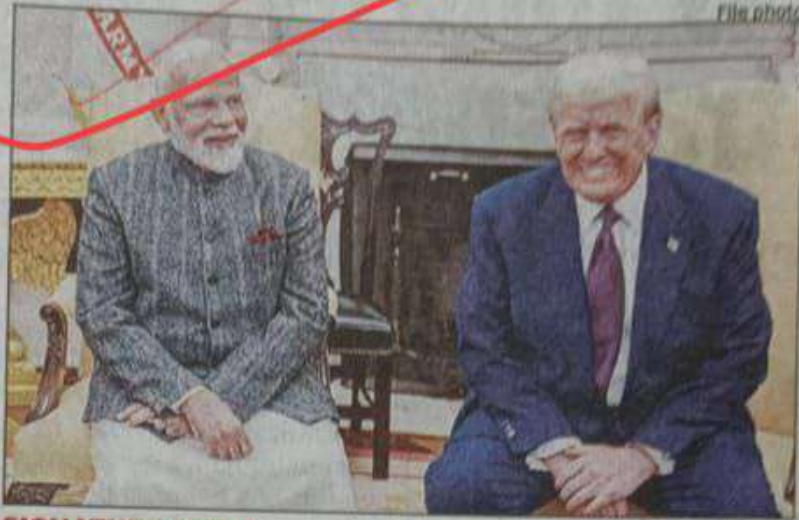
Washington: The Trump White House on Tuesday flagged New Delhi's tariffs on American bourbon, accounting for a pittance of overall US exports, as a contentious issue at a time the World Health Organisation has said no level of alcohol consumption is safe for health.

Ignoring India's lowering of duty on American bourbon from 150% to 100% just before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Feb 13 visit to Washington, Trump's spokesperson Karoline Leavitt insisted on Tuesday that India's 150% tariff on American alcohol is unhelpful, even as the US President was outside promoting Tesla, which is also making inroads into India much to his disapproval of a prospective manufacturing facility there.

"Look at India, 150% tariff on American alcohol. Do you think that's helping Kentucky Bourbon be exported to India? I don't think so," Leavitt raged at the WH press briefing, pulling out what she called a "handy-dandy chart" of tariffs imposed by various countries on American products.

"President Trump believes in reciprocity and it is about dang time that we have a president who actually looks out for the interests of American businesses and workers," Leavitt fumed, even as Trump's erratic tariff policy that changes by the day has caused turmoil in global markets.

Leavitt also seemed not to take note of India's well-pub-



SIGNATURE SPIRIT

licised lowering of tariffs on bourbon from 150% to 50%, with an additional tax of 50%, bringing down the overall duty to 100%.

Much of the grandstanding appeared to involve domestic politics where Kentucky, the fount of American bourbon and a solid red Republican state, has a Democratic governor who defeated a Trump-endorsed candidate in the 2023 gubernatorial elections.

India is a pitifully small market in the mini-millions for American spirits, which itself accounts for only around \$2.2 billion — of about \$3 trillion overall US global exports — with Europe being the major market for American alcohol.

American whiskeys account for 63% of all US spirits exports, reaching \$1.4 billion in 2023.

But renowned for its fried chicken, Kentucky wants to supplement it with bourbon to India, a whisky-loving country that is famously said to drink more Scotch

than is manufactured in Scotland. Kentucky's Republican lawmakers eager to advance the state's economy and keep it solidly red have taken note of India's lowering of duties on bourbon but that's inadequate for the White House.

"Big win for Kentucky's signature bourbon industry! Due to President Trump's leadership, India is cutting tariffs on bourbon by 50%, expanding the global marketplace for our distillers. I met with treasury secretary Bessent and incoming commerce secretary Lutnick to ensure America's signature spirit is treated fairly in all corners of the world," Andy Barr, a GOP congressman from the state, said recently.

But for a White House intoxicated with the prospect of making America richer, that's not enough.

It wants India to drink more, never mind the WHO advisory that alcohol is a Group 1 carcinogen which also includes asbestos, radiation, and tobacco.

# MoD inks **Rs 2,906 cr** contract with BEL for transportable radar Ashwini

NEW DELHI, Mar 12 (PTI)

**THE** Ministry of Defence (MoD) on Wednesday signed a Rs 2,906 crore contract with State-run Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) for procurement of transportable radar (Ashwini) for the Indian Air Force.

The radar has been indigenously designed and developed by Electronics and Radar Development Establishment of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).



It is capable of tracking aerial targets from high-speed fighter aircraft to slow moving targets such as unmanned aerial vehicles and helicopters. The Defence Ministry said acquisition of the radar will significantly enhance the operational preparedness of the Indian Air Force.

“As part of the government’s efforts to strengthen indigenous defence

capabilities, the Ministry of Defence has inked a capital acquisition contract with BEL for the procurement of Low-level Transportable Radar, LLTR (Ashwini) at a cost of Rs 2,906 crore,” an official readout said. The contract was signed in presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh.

The LLTR is a radar based on state-of-the-art solid state technology. “The programme is a major step towards achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing by reducing dependency on foreign origin equipment manufacturers besides acting as a catalyst for the development of defence industrial ecosystem in the country,” the readout said.