

1st round: Iran, US agree to more talks over Tehran's N-programme

MUSCAT (Oman), Apr 12 (AP)

IRAN and the United States will hold more negotiations next week over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme, Iranian state television reported on Saturday at the end of the first round of talks between the two countries since President Donald Trump returned to the White House.

Iranian state TV said, US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi "briefly spoke in the presence of the Omani Foreign

Minister" at the end of the talks, marking a direct interaction between the two nations locked in decades of tensions.

Araghchi later told Iranian state TV that the next round of talks will take place on April 19.

He described the negotiations so far as constructive, telling there were four rounds of messages exchanged indirectly between Iran and the US during the talks in Muscat, Oman.

American officials did not immediately acknowledge the Iranian reports, which Tehran likely speeded out to its public

ahead of a possible Trump post on a social media. But declaring that the two sides spoke face-to-face — even if briefly — suggests the negotiations went well.

The talks began at around 3:30 pm local.

The two sides spoke for over two hours at a location in the outskirts of Oman, ending the talks around 5:50 pm local time. The convoy believed to be carrying Witkoff returned to Muscat, the capital of Oman, before disappearing into traffic around a neighbourhood that is home to the US Embassy.

J&K LG, Army chief pay tributes to martyred JCO

■ The Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) of the Indian Army stated that the Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi and all ranks of the Indian Army salute the supreme sacrifice of the braveheart.



JAMMU/HAMIRPUR, Apr 12 (PTI)

JAMMU and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Saturday paid tributes to a Junior Commissioned Officer who died in an encounter with terrorists near the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu.

A wreath-laying ceremony for Subedar Kuldeep Chand was held at military garrison Tanda in Jammu's Akhnoor in the afternoon and his mortal remains were despatched to his family in

Security personnel pay last respects to Subedar Kuldeep Chand of 9 PUNJAB, who was killed leading counter-infiltration operation along LoC in Jammu, during a wreath laying ceremony at Tanda in Akhnoor on Saturday. (PTI)

Himachal Pradesh for last rites, officials said. Chand is survived by his son, daughter, wife and elderly parents. His body would be cremated at his native village on Sunday.

They said Senior Army, Police and civil officers led by General Officer Commanding of 10th Infantry Division Major General

Sameer Shrivastava and Senior Superintendent of Police, Jammu, Joginder Singh laid wreaths at the body and saluted the sacrifice of the Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO).

Subedar Chand lost his life in a gunfight with terrorists attempting to infiltrate into India from the Pakistan side in the Keri-

Bhatal area of the Akhnoor sector late on Friday night.

In a condolence message, Lt Governor Sinha said, "I salute the supreme sacrifice of our Army braveheart Sub Kuldeep Chand who laid down his life in the line of duty. His valour and sacrifice will never be forgotten. The entire nation stands firmly with the family of the martyr in this hour of grief."

Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) of the Indian Army, in a post on X, said the Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi and all ranks of the Indian Army salute the supreme sacrifice of the braveheart. "The Indian Army offers deepest condolences and stands firm with the bereaved family in this hour of grief," it said.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu has expressed grief over the death of Kuldeep Chand and said, "The news of Kuldeep Kumar ji, a resident of Kohvi village of my assembly constituency Naudan, being martyred is very sad.

Air pollution may be making rainfall more acidic: IMD, IITM

NEW DELHI, Apr 12 (PTI)

AIR POLLUTION could be making rainfall more acidic in cities such as Vishakhapatnam, Allahabad, Mohanbari (Assam), while dust from the Thar could be making rain more alkaline in Jodhpur, Pune and Srinagar, according to an analysis.

The study by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, analysed the pH value -- which measures acidity or basicity -- of rainfall of ten cities in India.

The data recorded at GAW stations from 1987 to 2021 were

analysed.

The findings are published by the IMD as a 'met monograph,' a comprehensive analysis of a meteorological topic.

The study suggests that atmospheric conditions and local emissions can affect the chemistry or pH of rainfall.

Both acidic and alkaline rain can have toxic effects, affecting aquatic and plant life, even as the study's authors said "acid rain does not currently pose a major and immediate threat to our region."

They attributed acidity in rain in Vizag to emissions from the oil refinery, power plant and fertiliser facility, and that in

Mohanbari to acidic nature of soil and charged particles coming from vegetation.

However, dust from the Thar desert could be countering the acidic nature of rainwater of Jodhpur and Srinagar, thereby raising the pH value of rains in these cities, the team said.

Season-to-season changes too could play a role, the authors said, as they found that rainfall during dry season tends to be slightly more acidic compared to that during wet season.

This is because most of the acidic particles in the air would be washed at the first rainfall event, resulting in lower pH values, the team explained.

'India will always work within WTO framework but reforms essential'

NEW DELHI, Apr 12 (IANS)

INDIA will always work within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) framework but WTO reforms are essential, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, has said, adding that the country remains committed to multilateralism.

Goyal cited the need to reassess the definition of "developing countries" and called for clarity on e-commerce rules, agriculture decisions, and fisheries negotiations. "Unless those who have caused overfishing are willing to scale down, emerging economies will never get a fair chance," he noted at the 9th Global Technology Summit here.

Reiterating India's support for



WTO principles, he said, "India will always work within the WTO framework. Our bilateral agreements, including with the US and EU, operate within its scope."

Goyal highlighted the opportunities that lie ahead for India in reshaping global trade, especially with trusted partners such as the United States.

Calling India the fastest-growing large economy in the world, Goyal said, "There is a delta of

opportunity that India offers. In the next two to two-and-a-half decades, India will grow eight times, supported by the aspirations of 1.4 billion Indians. This creates a massive domestic demand and offers the benefits of scale that are being recognised globally." The Minister shared that in the last two years alone, at least eight high-level delegations have visited India, signalling the world's growing inter-

est in forging stronger trade relationships with the country. He underscored that India's current tariff protection measures are directed mainly at non-market economies that engage in unfair trade practices. "India is well-positioned to engage in bilateral partnerships with countries that value reciprocity, trust, and fair play," he stated.

Refuting concerns about external pressure on India's trade decisions, Goyal said, "There is no pressure. India being in a position of such opportunity is in itself very exciting. While our exports today form a relatively small share of our GDP, our strong domestic market and aspirational youth are ready to take Indian industry global."

Rana grilled on 'plotter he met in Dubai'

■ Rana kept on 'suicide watch' in his NIA cell

NEW DELHI, Apr 12 (IANS)

EXTRADITED 26/11 terrorist Tahawwur Rana's questioning by the NIA has revolved around extracting information from him about a key plotter from Dubai and a person who hosted and helped co-conspirator David Coleman Headley in Mumbai ahead of the 2008 attack, sources said on Saturday.

Investigators are also trying to question the 64-year-old Pakistani-Canadian terrorist to rule the possibility of involvement of fugitive terrorist Dawood Ibrahim or his D-Company's Dubai network in the 26/11 conspiracy, said sources.



ing suicide.

Rana's fresh voice sample has also been sent for forensic test and matched with recorded phone conversations he held with co-conspirators soon after the attack, said sources.

Rana, a former Pakistan Army Medical Corps worker who is facing NIA grilling
(Contd on page 5)

The mystery man from Dubai, apparently, was aware of the attack in advance, said investigators who have constantly kept a watch on Rana in his NIA cell to prevent him from attempt-

2 more terrorists killed in J&K

JAMMU, Apr 12 (PTI)

TWO terrorists were killed in an ongoing operation in a snow-bound area of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, senior security officials said on Saturday, reaffirming their resolve to completely root out terrorism from the region.

The killings raised the number of terrorists neutralised in the ongoing operations in the Chhatru belt of the hilly district in the past two days to three. One terrorist was eliminated by the security forces on Friday morning.

Official sources said the slain terrorists were affiliated with Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit and included a top commander, Saifullah, who was active in the Chenab valley region for the past one year.

Assam Rifles' 5-Sector Commander
(Contd on page 5)



Army JCO killed

JAMMU, Apr 12 (PTI)

AN Army Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) was killed in an encounter with terrorists along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Akhnoor sector, but

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