

BILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

Modi, US V-P Vance to hold talks today

NEW DELHI, Apr 20 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi will host a dinner for US Vice President JD Vance and Indian-origin Second Lady Usha on Monday evening after holding talks with the American leader on a range of key issues, including trade, tariff, regional security and ways to expand the overall bilateral engagement.

The US Vice President, his wife Usha and their three children -- Ewan, Vivek, and Mirabel -- are scheduled to land at the Palam airbase at 10 am on Monday on a four-day India visit.

Vance's first visit to India comes weeks after US President Donald Trump imposed and then paused a sweeping tariff regime against around 60 countries, including India. New Delhi and Washington are now holding negotiations to seal a bilateral trade agreement that is expected to address a vari-



ety of issues, including tariff and market access.

Hours after arriving in Delhi, Vance and his family are scheduled to visit the Swaminarayan Akshardham temple and could visit a shopping complex selling traditional Indian handcrafted goods, people familiar with the matter told

Key issues, including trade, tariff, regional security to be discussed

PTI. The Vances will be welcomed on their arrival at the Palam airbase by a senior Union Cabinet

Minister. Besides Delhi, Vance and his family will travel to Jaipur and Agra. Vance is expected to be accompanied by at least five senior officials, including from

(Contd on page 5)

IAF's MiG-29, Jaguar jets set for war games in UAE today

New Delhi: India has deployed MiG-29 and Jaguar fighter jets for the multi-nation 'Desert Flag' exercise at the UAE, with the IAF keeping up the momentum of taking part in such international air combat drills to further hone its war-fighting skills.

The Desert Flag-10 exercise, at the Al Dhafra air base from April 21 to May 8, will also witness the participation of air forces of the US, UK, Australia, Germany, France, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Turkey.

"The aim of the exercise is to undertake complex and diverse fighter engagements, with exchange of operational knowledge and best practices with some of the most capable air forces in the world," IAF spokesperson Wing Commander Jaideep Singh. "Participation in such exercises enhances mutual understanding, interoperability and strengthens military cooperation among the participating nations. IAF's participation underscores India's commitment to strengthening defence ties," he added. TNN

Trump admin plans to cut Africa ops in state dept overhaul, shrink US embassy in Ottawa

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MORE CHANGES ON CARDS

Bhutan and the Maldives.

One of the most drastic proposed changes would be eliminating the bureau of African affairs, which oversees policy in sub-Saharan Africa. It would be replaced by a much smaller special envoy office for African affairs that would report to the White House national security council. The office would focus on a handful of issues, including "coordinated counterterrorism operations" and "strategic extraction and trade of critical natural resources." The draft also said all "nonessential" embassies and consulates in sub-Saharan Africa would be closed by Oct 1. Diplomats would be sent to Africa on "targeted, mission-driven deployments".

Canada operations would

be put into a new North American affairs office under Rubio's authority, and it would be run by a "significantly reduced team," the draft said. The department would also severely shrink the US embassy in Ottawa.

The department would eliminate a bureau overseeing democracy and human rights issues; one that handles refugees and migration; and another that works with international organisations. The under secretary position overseeing the first two bureaus would be cut. So would the office of the under secretary of public diplomacy and public affairs.

The department would also get rid of the position of the special envoy for climate.

The department would establish a new senior position, the under secretary for transnational threat elimination, to oversee counternarcotics policy and other issues, the draft memo said. The Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance would absorb the remnants of the USAID, which has been gutted over the last two months.

As for personnel, the memo said, the department needs to move from its "current outdated and disorganised generalist global rotation model to a smarter, strategic, regionally specialised career service framework to maximise expertise." That means people trying to get into the Foreign Service would choose during the application process which regional corps they want to work in. The department would offer buyouts to foreign service and civil service officers until Sept 30.

The draft order also calls for narrowing Fulbright scholarships so that they are given only to students doing master's-level studies in national security matters. And it says the department will end its contract with Howard University, a historically Black institution, to recruit candidates for the Rangel and Pickering fellowships, which are to be terminated. The goal of those fellowships has been to help students from underrepresented groups get a chance at entering the Foreign Service soon after graduation. NYT

The draft executive order calls for ending the foreign service exam for aspiring diplomats, and it lays out new criteria for hiring, including "alignment with the president's foreign policy vision". It says the department must greatly expand its use of artificial intelligence to help draft documents, and to undertake "policy development and review" and "operational planning".

The proposed reorganisation would get rid of regional bureaus that help make and enact policy in large parts of the globe. Instead, the draft says, those functions would fall under four "corps": Eurasia Corps, consisting of Europe, Russia and Central Asia; Mid-East Corps, consisting of Arab nations, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan; Latin America Corps, consisting of Central America, South America and the Caribbean; and Indo-Pacific Corps, consisting of East Asia, Southeast Asia, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal,

Heatwaves set to return in parts of north and central India, warns IMD

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The brief respite from extreme heat, brought on by two wet spells in northwest and parts of central India, is over. The India Meteorological Department Sunday predicted a gradual rise in day (maximum) temperatures by 2-3 degrees Celsius over northwest India in the next five days and a fresh heatwave spell in many parts of the country.

IMD said heatwave conditions are very likely in isolated pockets of south UP and MP during April 22-24; over Rajasthan and Haryana on April 23-24; and over Vidarbha during April 21-23.

Issuing 'yellow' (be aware) alerts for these regions, IMD advised people, particularly the elderly and infants to avoid heat exposure.

The Northeast, however, may get a fresh spell of heavy rain from Tuesday while east India is likely to see a gradual

26°C: Del's warmest April night in 3 years

With the minimum temperature shooting up to 26 degrees C, four notches above normal, Delhiites suffered the warmest April night in three years. A higher night temperature at Safdarjung in April was last recorded in 2022 (April 14) at 26.2 degrees C. Day temperatures are likely to be 39-41 degrees C over next two days, but rise further thereafter. **P 2**

temperature rise of 4-6 degrees C in the next four days.

Heatwave conditions peaked around April 8, with mercury crossing 46 degrees C in parts of west Rajasthan. Thereafter, a spell of rain from April 9 to 12, and another last week, brought temperatures down by several notches. On Sunday, Chandrapur in Maharashtra was India's hottest spot at 44.6 degrees C.

States push labour reforms amid delay in notifying codes

Amend Rules To Woo Investors And Create Jobs

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New Delhi: As the long-awaited labour codes remain pending for official notification, several states have proactively amended their labour regulations to align with key industry demands — part of a broader strategy to position themselves as investment-friendly destinations.

At least 19 states and UTs have increased the retrenchment threshold from 100 to 300 without govt approval—a demand that industry has been making for two decades. An equal number of states and UTs have also doubled the threshold for workers for applicability of Factories Act to 20 (for units with power)

ALLOW WOMEN IN NIGHT SHIFTS

11 states, Union territories raise quarterly overtime limit to 125 hours

19 states raise the threshold of retrenchment

without govt's approval from 100 to 300 workers

25 allow fixed-term employment

31 permit women to work in night shifts



and 40 (for those without power). Ditto for Contract Labour Act, where the threshold for number of workers for applicability of the law has been raised from 20 to 50.

While several of the amendments may be limited to NDA-governed states, 31 have gone ahead with the change when it comes to allowing women to work night shifts. All states and UTs have notified reforms related to compliance notice before prosecution. This indicates that irrespective of party line, there are some issues on which economics trumps po-

litics as state leadership scouts for investments, especially in the manufacturing sector, to create jobs.

Similarly, fixed-term employment has been permitted in 25 states, enabling easier hiring to deal with seasonal requirements. In fact, after amending the regulations, states such as Madhya Pradesh have introduced safeguards to prevent misuse of the provisions, following some complaints. Twenty-five states have also moved ahead and allowed for compounding of offences.

Besides, sources told **TOI**

that close to two dozen states and UTs are considering mandating issue of notice for strikes and lockouts across industrial establishments, a provision that applied to public sector companies.

Several of the issues on which the states and UTs have moved forward are also included in the four labour codes that were enacted with much fanfare five years ago, but are yet to be notified.

Consultations with the states are currently underway, with West Bengal holding it up, said sources.

But the Centre's nudge to the states, including during a national workshop conducted by the labour ministry, has got states moving within the current legal framework.

A task force led by cabinet secretary T V Somanathan is putting together a set of best practices that states can follow, and the revised labour regulations are a crucial element.