

S Arabia cuts oil prices

Saudi Arabia is cutting oil prices for buyers in Asia by more than expected after OPEC+ further delayed an output revival, underscoring how the outlook for the market remains weak.

State oil producer Saudi Aramco will sell its main Arab Light crude grade at a

premium of 90 cents a barrel to the regional benchmark in Jan, according to a price list seen by Bloomberg. That compares with \$1.7 for this month.

Earlier, OPEC+ — led by Saudi Arabia and Russia — agreed to push back production increases planned for

the start of January by another three months, following two previous delays. The prospect of an impending oversupply leaves the group with the uncomfortable dilemma of whether to prolong production curbs well into 2025 or risk a price slump. BLOOMBERG

Myanmar border fencing gathers pace, BRO to complete project in 10 years

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New Delhi: India has stepped-up work on fencing the 1,643-km porous border with Myanmar, which will be completed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in phases over the next 10 years.

The ongoing ambitious project will entail around Rs 20,000 crore being spent on the fence itself and another Rs 11,000 crore on construction of over 60 border roads.

"As per the survey conducted by govt agencies, over 1,500-km of fencing — which includes 300-km of electric fencing — is required for effective management of the India-Myanmar border as well as ensuring security and stability of India's north-east region," Army sources told TOI.

The fencing comes at a time when there are still no signs of normalcy returning to conflict-torn Manipur, where over 250 people have been killed in ethnic violence between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities since May last year.

While over 60,000 people have been internally displaced, less than half of the around 6,000 weapons looted in the state have been recovered so far by security forces.

The volatile situation in



The ongoing project will entail around Rs 20,000 crore on the fence and another Rs 11,000 crore on the construction of over 60 border roads. The fencing comes at a time when there are still no signs of normalcy returning to conflict-torn Manipur

Myanmar amid the fighting between the military and armed opposition outfits over the last one year, subsequent to the coup in Feb 2021, has also led to over 31,000 people fleeing and seeking refuge in India.

"Myanmar's ongoing instability has further aggravated the situation, with a surge in smuggling, human trafficking and movement of armed infiltrators. Drugs worth Rs 1,125 crore, for instance, have been seized along the border in the last six-seven months," a source said.

Some communities in Manipur, Nagaland, Mizo-

ram and Arunachal Pradesh, all of which border Myanmar, have however strongly opposed the proposed fence as well as scrapping of the 'Free Movement Regime', which allowed people residing along the border to venture 16-km into each other's territory without visas, earlier this year.

Apex Kuki bodies, for instance, say the twin steps "threaten to infringe upon the cultural, traditional and historical rights of indigenous communities".

Some experts have also criticised the "costly" move, stressing it will cause hardships to people who share

ethnic ties across the border as well as disrupt closer connectivity, trade and people-to-people ties.

The defence and security establishment, however, contends the fencing does not intend to restrict the movement of civilians or sever cultural and familial connections on either side of the border.

"A network of gates with biometric systems along the fence is being planned to allow cross-border movement, while ensuring security. The locations of these entry and exit points will be decided through collaborative consultations with local residents," another source said.

The fencing's primary objective is to curb "the movement of armed groups", as well as stem the smuggling of weapons, drugs, human trafficking and illegal immigration, he added.

The "success" of the 10-km fencing completed in Moreh (Manipur) underlines the project's potential to improve both security and trade management.

"The fencing will also regulate and boost legitimate trade, ensuring economic benefits for the local communities while eliminating the adverse impact of illegal trade," he said.

Indian embassy in Syria working, in touch with nationals: Govt

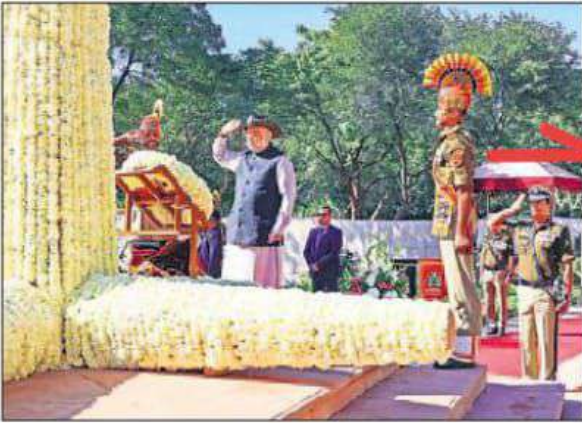
New Delhi: As rebels took control of Damascus, with President Bashar al-Assad having fled the Syrian capital, the Indian embassy remained operational and in touch with all Indian nationals in the country.

Govt sources said all Indian nationals are safe and the embassy remains available to assist them in Syria. According to Indian govt, there are 90 Indian nationals in Syria, including 14 who work for UN missions.

In an advisory late on Friday night, govt had asked Indian nationals to avoid all travel to Syria, until further notification. It also asked Indians in Syria to leave, if possible, by commercial flights. Flights at the Damascus international airport were said to have been suspended on Sunday after the fall of govt. According to a Reuters report, Syrian rebels declared they had ousted the president after seizing control of Damascus on Sunday, forcing him to flee and ending his family's decades of autocratic rule after more than 13 years of civil war. TNN

SECURING BORDERS

India to create comprehensive ANTI-DRONE UNIT: Shah



Union Home Minister Amit Shah pays tribute at the Amar Prahari Sthal on the 60th Border Security Force (BSF) Raising Day, at STC BSF, in Jodhpur in Rajasthan.

(PTI)

JODHPUR, Dec 8 (PTI)

UNION Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said India will soon create a comprehensive anti-drone unit to secure its borders as the

"menace" of unmanned aerial vehicles is going to get serious in the coming days...

Addressing BSF troops at the 60th Raising Day event of the force here at its training camp, about 300 km from the India-Pakistan border, Shah said the initial results of a "laser equipped anti-drone gun-mounted" mechanism have been encouraging. This has led to an increase in drone neutralisation and detection cases, up from 3 per cent to 55 per cent, along the India-Pakistan border in Punjab, he said.

"The drone menace is going to get more serious in the coming days...

We are tackling this issue with a 'whole of Government' approach with the defence and research organisations and the DRDO joining hands. "We are going to create a comprehensive anti-drone unit for the country

in the coming time," Shah said. More than 260 drones have been downed or recovered from India's border with Pakistan this year as compared to about 110 in 2023. The maximum number of such interdictions of drones carrying arms and drugs have taken place in Punjab and very few in Rajasthan and Jammu.

The minister reviewed the ceremonial parade, took salute and awarded medals to gallantry award winners. The BSF which has a strength of about 2.65 lakh personnel, was raised on December 1, 1965. It is primarily tasked with guarding more than 6,300 kms of Indian fronts with Pakistan and Bangladesh apart from rendering a variety of duties in the internal security domain of the country. Shah said the ongoing Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) for securing India's borders with Pakistan (2,289 km) and Bangladesh (4,096 km) is a work in progress.