

No adverse impact of ~~RED SEA~~ crisis so far on India's trade



NEW DELHI, Feb 4 (PTI)

THERE is no adverse impact on India's exports and imports so far due to the Red Sea crisis, an official said. The official said that the transportation cost has increased as the shippers are taking a long route.

"There is no impact in volume terms so far. Only the transportation cost is up. It has risen for all the countries. It has not affected the trade adversely so far. We have to see the long term demand, but it will depend on the EU and the US," the official added.

These two regions account for over 30 per cent of the country's total exports.

However, exporters said that they are keeping their fingers crossed as due to the significant jump in freight cost, India's exports may be impacted.

The trade data for January will be released by the Commerce Ministry on February 15. In December last year, exports rose marginally by one per cent to USD 38.45 billion. Due to the attacks by Yemen-based Houthi rebels on commercial ships, the movement of goods from the Red Sea,

the world's busiest shipping route, has disrupted the global supply chains as vessels have to take long routes for exports and imports.

The immediate ripple effects are seen in increased freight costs, mandatory war risk insurance, and significant delays due to rerouting.

According to think tank GTRI, the average container spot rates have more than doubled since early December 2023.

Basmati rice exporters face freight costs soaring to USD 2,000 per 20-tonne container for destinations around the Red Sea, marking a 233 per cent increase, it has said in a report.

Houthi group has been using drones and rockets to target ships, which are transporting goods through the strait of Bab al-Mandab, which is a crucial shipping route connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean.

India in driver seat of Quad, says US envoy Eric Garcetti

■ **By Manik Gupta**

JAIPUR, Feb 4 (PTI)

US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said India is in the "driving seat" of the Quad, while America is in the seat next to it with the "corrective steering wheel", and added that it is up to India to "forcefully define" the nature of the diplomatic partnership.

Garcetti, speaking here at the 17th edition of Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF), used a rather unique analogy of 'eating, drinking and sharing a ride together' to explain the different roles of member countries in the Quad.

"India is very much in the driver seat of the Quad... May be America is in the next

seat with the corrective steering wheel, I think Japan has been an avid navigator from the beginning and Australia is really excited to be back in the car and asking if everybody has enough to drink and eat, and where we are going. So it is a great time and we love these different roles. I want to sit in the back some other time and relax, but it is in some ways up to India to most forcefully define what we want to do with the Quad," said Garcetti on Saturday in a session, Heart of the Matter: Quad and the new Indo-Pacific Vision.

"Bilaterals are always engaging but the two countries get a little bored of each other when it is just direct," he added.

Your visit will boost India-France friendship: PM Modi to Macron

NEW DELHI, Feb 4 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said French President Emmanuel Macron's recent India visit and participation in the Republic Day celebrations will surely boost India-France friendship.

The French president was on two-day visit to India last month and was the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations here on January 26.

Macron on Sunday shared a video montage from the visit on X and wrote, "A look back at an exceptional trip in India."

Tagging his post, Prime

Minister Modi said, "It was an honour to have you in India, P r e s i d e n t @EmmanuelMacron."

"Your visit and participation in the Republic Day celebrations will surely boost India-France friendship," Modi said.

India and France on January 26 unveiled an ambitious defence industrial roadmap to co-develop critical military hardware, firmed up a space situational awareness programme, while the Tata Group and Airbus announced to jointly build H125 helicopters, following talks between Modi and Macron.

US, UK and allies strike 36 Houthi targets in Yemen

■ By Lalit K Jha
WASHINGTON, Feb 4 (PTI)

THE US and the UK have conducted joint strikes on 36 Houthi targets across 13 locations in Yemen, in another wave of assaults intended to degrade the capabilities of the Iran-backed militia that has targeted international shipping vessels in the Red Sea in response to the Israel-Hamas war.

The Pentagon said the UK, Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and New Zealand were involved in Saturday's strikes against Houthi targets. The latest strikes, executed with fighter jets and ships, come after the

US launched strikes on 85 targets in Syria and Iraq on Friday in response to a deadly drone attack on a US military base in Jordan last Sunday that killed three of its service members.

"Military from the United States and the United Kingdom conducted additional strikes against the Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen," Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement.

This collective action sends a clear message to the Houthis that they will continue to bear further consequences if they do not end their illegal attacks on international shipping and naval vessels, Austin said.

"We will not hesitate to

Precision strikes are intended to disrupt and degrade the capabilities that the Houthis use to threaten global trade and the lives of innocent mariners

defend lives and the free flow of commerce in one of the world's most critical waterways," Austin said.

These strikes, he said, are intended to disrupt further and degrade the capabilities of the Iranian-backed Houthi militia to conduct their reckless and destabilising attacks against

US and international vessels lawfully transiting the Red Sea.

Austin said that the coalition forces targeted 13 locations associated with the Houthis' deeply buried weapons storage facilities, missile systems and launchers, air defence systems, and radars, Austin said.

A joint statement issued by the US, the UK and its other coalition partners said that the militaries of the United States and United Kingdom, with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, and New Zealand conducted an additional round of proportionate and necessary strikes against 36 Houthi targets across 13 locations in

Yemen. This was in response to the Houthis' continued attacks against international and commercial shipping as well as naval vessels transiting the Red Sea. These precision strikes are intended to disrupt and degrade the capabilities that the Houthis use to threaten global trade and the lives of innocent mariners.

The strikes are in response to a series of illegal, dangerous, and destabilising Houthi actions since previous coalition strikes on January 11 and 22, 2024, including the January 27 attack which struck and set ablaze the Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker M/V Marlin Luanda, the statement added.

Baloch Army eliminates 78 Pakistani troops

2-day operation
'Dara-e-Bolan'

BALUCHISTAN, Feb 4 (ANI)

THE Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) killed 78 Pakistani soldiers as it conducted its Operation Dara-e-Bolan, a two-day campaign featuring 385 'Baloch freedom fighters' including 12 fidayeen, 'Balochistan Post' reported citing a statement from the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA).

"Around 385 Baloch freedom fighters, including 12 fidayeen, participated in Operation Dara-e-Bolan; 78 enemy personnel eliminated - BLA is ready to work with any nation against the common enemy for mutual benefit," read the statement by the Baloch Liberation Army.

The BLA reported the 'successful' completion of Operation Dara-e-Bolan, a two-day-long military operation from January 29 to 31. The



Objective of Operation Dara-e-Bolan was to inform the institutions and nations that have mutual interests with the Baloch nation that Baloch is ready to work together against the common enemy.

operation involved the participation of 385 BLA fighters from various units of the group,

including 12 'Fidayeen' (self-sacrificers) from the Majeed Brigade, members of the Fateh

Squad, Special Tactical Operations Squad, and the intelligence wing.

BLA stated that the operation, which concluded at 7 pm on January 31, achieved all its targeted goals. The BLA forces secured control over a 70 km radius area, including the town of Mach and the strategically important highway NH-65, according to the statement.

During Operation Dara-e-Bolan, BLA claimed to have eliminated 78 'enemy personnel', with 45 neutralised within the first three hours of the operation. Notable incidents included the elimination of 10 Frontier Corps (FC) personnel in an attack on a military camp in Peer Ghaib, Bolan, and the killing of four Pakistani soldiers in an attack on a military convoy in Gokurt, 'The Balochistan Post' reported.

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PM'S FUTURE PLAN: Power bills @ 0



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during roadshow in Guwahati in Assam. Modi on Sunday rolled out development projects worth Rs 11,600 crore in Assam. (PTI)

GUWAHATI, Feb 4 (IANS)

THE Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that the Government is working to bring the electricity bills of the households to zero.

While unveiling several key projects in Assam, Modi said, "We have run programmes to install electricity connections in every household in the country. Now we have planned to make the electricity bills zero."

He said that setting up roof top solar power plants for 1 crore households in the country will pave the way towards achieving zero power bills.

Solar power roof top system will pave the way towards achieving zero power bills: Modi

"In the Budget, we have announced plans to put roof top solar panels in 1 crore houses.

This will not only bring down the electricity bills to zero, the people can have their own electricity generation system in the homes. They can even sell the electricity generated through solar power roof top system to earn money," Modi said in a massive public rally here. Modi on Sunday claimed that those in power after Independence could not understand the significance of places of worship and set a trend of being ashamed of their own culture for political reasons. He said

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