

India resumes ferry service with Lanka after 4 decades

NAGAPATTINAM/NEW DELHI,
Oct 14 (PTI)

FORTY years after it was disrupted due to civil war in Sri Lanka, ferry services between India and the island republic resumed on Saturday, a move Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed as an "important milestone" in strengthening bilateral ties.

Welcoming the resumption of ferry services, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe said it will help improve the connectivity, trade and cultural links between the two countries.

The service between Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai near Jaffna in the northern province



Flag off ceremony of the ferry services between Nagapattinam, India and Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka via video conference, on Saturday. (ANI)

of Sri Lanka aims to revive the ancient maritime connection between the two neighbours.

The high-speed ferry operated by the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) has a capacity of 150 passengers and would cover a distance of about 60 nm (110 Km) between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai in about 3.5 hours depending on the sea conditions.

In its inaugural journey, the vessel named Cheriyapani travelled with 50 passengers to Sri Lanka and will return to India by evening with passengers from the island nation. The passengers on the maiden voyage expressed joy over sailing to Sri Lanka.

Launch of India-Lanka ferry service truly big step, says Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, Oct 14 (PTI)

THE launch of a passenger ferry service from Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam to Kankesanthurai near Jaffna in Sri Lanka is a "truly big step" for boosting people-to-people contacts, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday.

In his remarks at a virtual ceremony on the launch of the ferry service, Jaishankar said that New Delhi has a "generous and far-sighted

approach" to its proximate nations, with a focus on connectivity, cooperation and contacts.

"In future, we are looking at grid connection, pipeline and economic corridor. And of course, support for all in Sri Lanka to live in equal dignity and equal rights," he said.

India has been conveying to Colombo to fulfill the aspirations of the Tamil community in the island nation and ensure a life of respect and dignity for it.

EAM to embark on six-day visit to Vietnam, Singapore

NEW DELHI, Oct 14 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will embark on a six-day visit to Vietnam and Singapore from Sunday to shore up bilateral cooperation in diverse areas. In the first leg of his visit, Jaishankar will visit Vietnam from October 15 to 18 to discuss ways to review the progress in several areas and discuss ways to further enhance cooperation, Ministry of External Affairs said.

Jaishankar's visit to the strategically-located Southeast Asian country comes less than three months after India gifted missile corvette INS Kirpan to the

Vietnamese armed forces, in reflection of the growing bilateral strategic partnership amid common concerns over China's increasingly aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea.

It was for the first time that India handed over a fully-operational corvette to any friendly foreign country. "India and Vietnam share a robust comprehensive strategic partnership. Vietnam is a key member of our Act East Policy. The external affairs minister's visit will provide an opportunity to review progress in several areas and discuss ways to further enhance bilateral cooperation," the MEA said.

Nagaland's 1st medical college opened

NEW DELHI, Oct 14 (PTI)

IN A span of just nine years, the number of MBBS seats in the country has increased from 64,000 to 1.6 lakh while that of the post-graduation seats has doubled, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Saturday as he inaugurated the Nagaland Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (NIMSR) in Kohima, the first medical college in the north-eastern State.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio said it was a historic day for the

people of Nagaland as a long-cherished dream of theirs was fulfilled. Mandaviya highlighted that the NIMSR is not just a medical college, but also a research institute.

"It will not only fulfil the purpose of imparting medical education, but will also address the health issues of the Naga people," he said. Highlighting the Centre's commitment towards improving medical education in the country, Mandaviya said, "In a span of just nine years, the (number of) MBBS seats in India has increased from 64,000

to 1.6 lakh. Similarly, PG seats have also doubled in the last nine years."

In a word of encouragement for the students and other stakeholders, the Union health minister said they should not limit their scope of research within the national borders. "We must encash on opportunities abroad as well," he said.

Mandaviya informed that the Centre has started foreign language courses in many medical education institutes, so that students can have an edge in getting jobs abroad.

PERIL IN MARITIME TRADE

The Israel-Hamas conflict has raised concerns about increased costs for Indian exporters, such as higher insurance premiums and elevated shipping expenses. These expenses stem from the heightened risk associated with shipping goods to regions experiencing geopolitical unrest.

BY K RAVEENDRAN

THE Israel-Palestine conflict has sent ripples through the shipping and maritime industry, leading international companies to issue cautionary advisories and adapt their operations in the region.

In view of the missile attacks and the incursion of opposing militias, the security of transporting goods through the port of Haifa has become uncertain. The transit of containers, especially hazardous materials, and the arrival of commercial vessels greatly emphasize the importance of security on this route and this could lead to a shift in the transportation of goods.

Maersk, a major player in the industry, reassured stakeholders by announcing that its port operations across Israel's key terminals are functioning without disruption. MSC echoed this sentiment, asserting that Israel's major terminals are operational, enabling them to facilitate cargo delivery.

However, the maritime industry is aware of the security situation, and companies such as MSC remain vigilant, pledging to monitor the situation closely and heed Government guidance. This underscores the industry's adaptability and resilience in the face of geopolitical tensions. For a start, the conflict serves as a testament to the shipping and maritime industry's ability to adapt, demonstrating that despite challenges and disruptions, trade and operations can persist, albeit with the necessary caution and vigilance.

According to Container Xchange, the ports directly affected by the action include Ashdod, situated a mere 50 km from the Gaza border; Israeli port and shipyard Haifa, operated by India's own Adanis, Ashkelon, located just 15 km from the Gaza border and has been severely impacted, rendering it incapable of normal operations due to missile threats; Hadera, which in comparison carries on without disruption, and port of Eilat, which similarly remains operational.

Beyond the ports, several global companies with a presence in Israel have been forced to adjust their operations. Chevron, the second-largest US oil and gas producer, was directed by Israel's energy ministry to shut down the Tamar natural gas field off the country's northern coast. Adani Ports, operator of the Haifa Port, assured stakeholders of operational readiness while closely monitoring the situation and having a business continuity plan in place.

India is a crucial trading partner for Israel, with \$3.94 billion in Israeli exports. The conflict could have an impact on bilateral trade, potentially leading to disruptions in Israel's exports to India. Key Indian exports to Israel include diesel, cut and unpolished diamonds, electronics, and telecom components like integrated circuits and photovoltaic cells.

Conversely, India's imports from Israel consist mainly of rough diamonds, fertilisers, and herbicides. This evolving trade relationship extends beyond traditional sectors, encompassing electronic

machinery, high-tech products, communication systems, and medical equipment.

The Israel-Hamas conflict has raised concerns about increased costs for Indian exporters, such as higher insurance premiums and elevated shipping expenses. These expenses stem from the heightened risk associated with shipping goods to regions experiencing geopolitical unrest. While the conflict may result in higher expenses for Indian exporters, the impact on trade volumes is expected to be limited unless the war escalates significantly. The primary concern is the financial burden on exporters, which may reduce their profit margins.

Israel's trade with China is characterised by a notable trade imbalance, with China being a major importer of Israeli goods. While Israel's exports to China are substantial at \$4.68 billion, the conflict may disrupt trade flows, particularly concerning Israel's high-tech exports. The disruption could affect Israel's exports and potentially hinder access to China's vast market.

The United States is a critical trade partner for Israel, with a strong focus on exports. Israel exports goods worth \$18.67 billion to the US, including high-tech products and defence-related items. Germany also is a key European trade partner for Israel. The conflict might impact Israel's exports to Germany, valued at \$1.88 billion. As Israel navigates regional instability, German imports from Israel could be affected.

It is pointed out that the conflict could serve as a reminder

of the uncertainties facing ambitious trade projects like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), positioned as a Western counterpart to China's Belt and Road. IMEC, involving railways, ports, and green energy, aligns with the G7's plans to mobilise \$600 billion by 2027 for global infrastructure investments. India's trade with Saudi Arabia has doubled in two years, reaching \$53 billion in 2023, but the corridor's true potential lies in strengthening Indian-European trade ties.

To fully realise IMEC, a reliable link between Saudi Arabia and Israel is essential. However, the ongoing regional complexities make it riskier for Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to normalise diplomatic relations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In the near term, the Suez Canal remains the primary route for goods from India to Europe. This conflict underscores the enduring complexities of reshaping global trade and financial routes, highlighting the unpredictable nature of such endeavours.

Geopolitical conflicts and global health crises, unfortunate as they are, often lead to unintended consequences, boosting profits in specific sectors. Wars tend to inflate returns for defence contractors, while the pandemic brought substantial gains for select pharmaceutical companies. The maritime industry is not immune to these dynamics, with shipowners reaping unexpected benefits from both types of crises. (IPA)

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RETALIATION MOVE: Israeli soldiers, tanks, munitions deployed near Gaza

■ By Ashoke Raj
TEL AVIV, Oct 14 (ANI)

IN A move to retaliate against Hamas terror attacks in Israel, Israeli soldiers, their tanks and munitions have been deployed near the Gaza border as they prepare for a full ground offensive against Hamas.

In the pictures coming in from the Gaza border, tanks can be seen firing shells towards the Gaza Strip. Moreover, soldiers are seen loading artillery shells into howitzers. Adding to this, Israeli infantry troops have been moving closer to the Gaza border in anticipation of a full ground offensive on Hamas.

Earlier in the day, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) asked residents of the Northern Gaza Strip to relocate to the southern part of the enclave using evacuation corridors between 10 am to 4 pm (local time), 'The Times of Israel' reported.

The Israeli military said, "If you care about yourself and your loved ones, go south as instructed." It further said, "Rest assured that Hamas leaders have taken care of themselves and are taking cover from strikes in the region."

Their message indicated that the IDF could be readying to



Israeli soldiers, tanks, munitions deployed near Gaza as they prepare for ground offensive.

Blinken calls for protection of civilians

RIYADH, Oct 14 (AP)

US SECRETARY of State Antony Blinken called on Saturday for protection for civilians in both the Gaza Strip and Israel as the Israeli military ordered half of the Palestinian territory's population to evacuate in advance of an expected ground assault.

Blinken met his Saudi Arabian counterpart, Prince

Faisal bin Farhan, in Riyadh as he began a third day of intense Middle East diplomacy aimed at preventing the Israel-Hamas war from expanding into a regional conflict. Both stressed the importance of minimising the harm to civilians as Israel prepared for an incursion against Hamas a week after the militant group's unprecedented attack in Israel.

launch a ground invasion in response to Hamas's attack. However, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged Israel to "reconsider" its warning, calling it "dangerous and deeply troubling," according to 'The New York Times'. WHO PLANE CARRYING MEDICAL SUPPLIES FOR PEOPLE OF GAZA LANDS IN EGYPT: A World Health Organisation (WHO) plane carrying medical supplies to support urgent health needs in Gaza has landed at Al-Arish airport in Egypt. The medical supplies will be delivered to Gaza to meet critical health needs as soon as humanitarian access through the Rafah crossing is established.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus reiterated his call on Israel to reconsider its decision to evacuate 1.1 million people in Gaza.

The plane carrying 78 cubic metres of health supplies includes enough trauma medicines and health supplies to treat 1,200 wounded patients and 1,500 patients suffering from heart diseases, hypertension, diabetes, and respiratory problems, and basic essential health supplies to serve the needs of 3,00,000 people, including pregnant women, the WHO announced in a press release.

Iran's Foreign Minister warns Israel from Beirut it could suffer 'a huge earthquake'

BEIRUT, Oct 14 (AP)

IRAN'S Foreign Minister on Saturday called on Israel to stop its attacks on Gaza, warning that the war might expand to other parts of the Middle East if Hezbollah joins the battle, and that would make Israel suffer "a huge earthquake."

Hossein Amirabdollahian told reporters in Beirut that Lebanon's Hezbollah group has taken all the scenarios of a war into consideration and Israel should stop its attacks on Gaza as soon as possible.

Israel considers Hezbollah its most serious immediate threat, estimating it has some 150,000 rockets and missiles, including precision-guided missiles that can hit anywhere in Israel.

The group, which has thousands of battle-hardened fighters who participated in Syria's 12-year conflict, also has different types of military drones.

Hezbollah fighters have been on full alert along Lebanon's borders with Israel following last Saturday's attack by the militant Palestinian group Hamas that left hundreds of Israeli civilians and soldiers dead.

On Saturday, the Israeli military said an Israeli drone strike along the border with Lebanon killed a "cell" that was trying to infiltrate into Israel.

CDS flags global changes creating uncertainty, volatile environment

BENGALURU, Oct 14 (PTI)

CHIEF of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan on Saturday said the ongoing geo-political, economic and technological changes are creating uncertainty in the world, and an environment that is volatile, com-

(Karnataka Branch), in association with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) here.

“If you have a look at national security strategies, countries like -- Japan, France, Germany, (the) UK, Poland, South Korea, Bangladesh and many others



Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited CMD CB Ananthakrishnan attend the Air Chief Marshal LM Katre Memorial Lecture, in Bengaluru on Saturday.

(ANI)

plex and ambiguous.

He said nations are preparing themselves for this uncertain kind of future and it is reflective in most of their national security strategies and defence spending.

The CDS delivered the 14th Air Chief Marshal LM Katre Memorial Lecture organised by Air Force Association

have revived their national security strategies. They actually revived at the time of the Ukraine conflict, but now bigger change is happening in the Middle East,” Chauhan said.

“If you look at defence spending of most of these nations they have expanded, almost doubled it up,” he pointed out.