

Jaishankar, Rubio talk trade, minerals & N-cooperation

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: External affairs minister **S Jaishankar** spoke to his US counterpart Marco Rubio Tuesday, discussing the next steps regarding ongoing trade negotiations and a possible meeting next month.



The chat took place a day after new US envoy Sergio Gor assumed office and backed trade negotiations, saying his mission was to take the US-India ties to the next level.

Gor also said that a call related to the ongoing talks for a bilateral trade deal would take place Tuesday without elaborating further. Jaishankar said on X that he and Rubio had a good conversation.

"Discussed trade, critical minerals, nuclear cooperation, defence & energy. Agreed to remain in touch on these and other issues," EAM said.

Gor himself described the Jaishankar-Rubio call as positive and said they discussed next steps regarding the "bilateral trade negotiations, critical minerals and a possible meeting next month".

EAM: BRICS a platform for dialogue & development

Jaishankar said Tuesday that amid geopolitical, economic and climate uncertainties, Brics remains an important forum for dialogue, cooperation and practical responses. Unveiling the logo of India's Brics presidency, he said India will take a humanity-first, people-centric approach to address shared challenges.

As India's refiners cut Russian crude, import drops 29% month-on-month

Atul.Mathur@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: India's import of Russian crude recorded a sharp 29% month-on-month decline, falling to the lowest volumes since implementation of the price cap policy, but is making a strong turnaround in Jan this year; Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said in its monthly analysis of Russian fossil fuel exports for Dec.

The report said the decline occurred despite total imports growing marginally. The drop was driven by a sharp reduction in imports by Reliance's Jamnagar refinery — to the tune of nearly 49% — and a 15% cut by state-owned refineries in Dec. According to Kpler, a global real-time data and analytics provider, India imported over 20.4 million barrels of crude from Russia in 2020. The month of Dec saw imports of 1.2 million barrels, compared with 1.8 million barrels a month earlier. Till Jan 13 this year, India had already imported over 1.1 million barrels of crude oil from Russia.

In terms of value, India was the third-highest buyer of Russian fossil fuels — displaced by Türkiye from the second position — importing a total of EUR 2.3 billion of Russian hydrocarbons in Dec, CREA said in the report.

REDUCING FUEL FLOW



While crude oil constituted 78% of India's purchases, totalling EUR 1.8 billion, coal (EUR 424 million) and oil products (EUR 82 million) constituted the remainder of India's monthly imports. India's import of crude oil was recorded at EUR 2.5 billion in Oct and EUR 2.6 billion in Nov.

The report added that the Jamnagar refinery cut its imports from Russia by almost half in Dec. "The entirety of their imports were supplied by Rosneft, albeit from cargoes purchased before the OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control in the US) sanctions came into effect. State-owned refineries also cut Russian imports by 15% in

Dec," the report stated.

As per CREA analysis, Russia's monthly fossil fuel export revenues saw a marginal 2% month-on-month decline to EUR 500 million per day — the second-lowest figure since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Monthly export volumes also witnessed a similar 2% month-on-month reduction. Total crude oil export revenues dropped by 12% to EUR 198 million per day.

Russia's fossil fuel exports remain highly concentrated, with China dominating coal and crude oil purchases, Türkiye dominating purchases of oil products, and the EU remaining the largest buyer of LNG and

'Venezuela chaos will not hit India's trade'

Developments in Venezuela will not have any material impact on India's global trade or the credit quality of Indian corporates, global analytics firm Crisil Ratings said. Venezuela's share, nearly 1.5%, of global crude oil supply is unlikely to cause sustained turbulence in prices, shielding India Inc from material adverse impact. "India's direct trade with Venezuela is insignificant, accounting for less than 0.25% of its total imports," it said. TNN

pipeline gas. While China remained the largest global buyer of Russian fossil fuels in Dec, accounting for 48% (EUR 6 billion) of Russia's export revenues from the top five importers, The EU was the fourth-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels, accounting for 11% (EUR 1.3 billion) of Russia's export revenues from the top five importers.

In Dec, five refineries in India, Türkiye and Brunei that use Russian crude exported EUR 943 million of oil products to sanctioning countries. The importers included the EU (EUR 436 million), the US (EUR 189 million), the UK (EUR 34 million) and Australia (EUR 283 million).

Shaksgam Valley is ours, building infra justified: China

Beijing: Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning on Monday rejected India's claim to Shaksgam Valley in Jammu & Kashmir.

"The territory you mentioned belongs to China. It's fully justified for China to conduct infrastructure construction on its own territory," Mao said when asked about border issues and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The spokesperson further said China and Pakistan had signed a boundary agreement in the 1960s and demarcated borders, and the settlement was an exercise of the rights of two sovereign states.

According to a Global Times report, the foreign ministry spokesperson said the CPEC was an economic cooperation project intended to promote local development and improve people's livelihoods. Mao stressed the border agreement between China and Pakistan, and the CPEC did not affect China's position on the Kashmir issue.

On Jan 9, India firmly rejected China's infrastructure buildup through the CPEC in Shaksgam Valley, terming it "illegal and invalid", while noting that the region was an "integral and inalienable part" of India. ANI

Situation along China front stable but needs vigil: Gen

Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Tuesday said the situation along the Northern front (with China) "remains stable but needs constant vigil". Apex-level interactions, including at military, diplomatic and ministerial levels, renewed contact and confidence-building measures were contributing to "gradual normalisation" of the situation. These have also enabled grazing, hydrotherapy camps and other activities along the northern borders, he said. TNN



CDS General Anil Chauhan, Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi, Navy vice chief Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan and IAF chief Air Chief Marshal AP Singh at National War Memorial in Delhi on Tuesday

'Army ready to admit women in infantry if society accepts'

Surendra.Singh
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: General Upendra Dwivedi said the Army was ready to induct women in the infantry but that was contingent on societal acceptance.

Stressing that women should not be seen as a "vulnerable commodity", the General, during a media briefing, said the Army's focus is on "gender neutrality". He said uniform standards were essential, but achieving them remained a challenge due to medical and operational constraints. Gen Dwivedi added that over the next 3-4 years, performance data of women officers would determine the opening of more roles, starting with supporting arms, followed by combat arms and eventually special forces, calling it a "sequential and welcome social change".

Giving an estimate of the

Modernising for future warfare: Army chief

Taking lessons from conflicts going on around the world, General Upendra Dwivedi said on Tuesday modernisation remained the urgent focus of the Indian Army, reports **Surendra Singh**. Dedicated regiments of drones with enhanced capabilities, rocket-cum-missile force, loitering munitions, new battalions like Bhairon equipped with modern technologies and advanced weapons and anti-missile defence radar and systems were on the cards.

He said over 90% ammunition was now indigenised, underscoring the push towards self-reliance. "After Operation Sindoor, drones got a new thrust," he said, adding that new drone formations had been raised and each command now had the capability to manufacture up to 5,000 drones. This capability can be enhanced to 20,000 or even 1 lakh drones, he said. "As of today, we have raised 13 Bhairav battalions, which are meant to bridge the gap between lethal platoons and special forces within infantry battalions," the Gen said.

number of women in the Army currently, the Army chief said, "In the NDA as of today, we have 60 women Army cadets and every year, we are looking at (inducting) 20 cadets. Also, in the Officers' Training Academy (OTA) — Chennai and Gaya — we are looking at 120 per year."

When it comes to inducting women in the other

ranks (ORs), it involved a change in Section 12 of the Army Act, he said. The Army was looking at a 12-time increase in women's induction in ORs by 2032. Currently, the total number of women officers was 8,000, he said. The Territorial Army recently opened up for women and 110 vacancies would come up for them, he added.

SIR scrutiny only for voter rolls, not deportation: EC

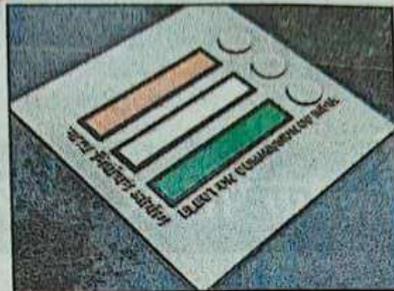
Dhananjay.Mahapatra
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Election Commission on Tuesday told Supreme Court that scrutiny of citizenship during SIR of voter lists was only meant to ensure deletion of non-citizens from electoral rolls and did not extend to termination of citizenship or deportation.

EC, through senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, told a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi that Article 326 of the Constitution mandated that only Indian citizens were entitled to be included in the electoral rolls.

For this purpose and this alone, EC was entitled to inquire and conclude whether a person was an Indian citizen, entitling him to be a voter. "If a person is found not to be a citizen of India by EC, then his name will either not be included in the voter list or, if it is there, then it would be struck off," he said.

Dwivedi said no person with a shadow of doubt over citizenship could be included in the voter list. However, such a determination by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) would not automatically result in a declaration that s/he was not a citizen of India — which was the domain of the competent authorities. "The ERO's conclusion about a voter's citizenship being doubtful and the resultant removal of his name from the voter list



ERO's conclusion that a voter's citizenship was doubtful would not automatically result in a declaration that s/he was not a citizen of India, EC said

can be set aside by a court of law only if it finds that the procedure adopted for such determination was perverse and illegal," he said.

"Under the SIR exercise, the citizenship of an individual for the purposes of Citizenship Act, 1955, will not terminate on account of the fact that he/she is held to be ineligible for registration in the electoral rolls," EC said.

Since the documents that could be used to establish citizenship were within a person's knowledge, the burden of proof lay with the individual, it said.

Dwivedi said when doubts arose about an elected representative's citizenship, the President or the governor was constitutionally bound by EC's opinion on whether the MP or MLA had incurred disqualification over being a non-citizen. This meant EC had the power to inquire into citizenship of MPs or MLAs if doubts arose, he said.

Arguments in the matter will resume Thursday.

SC moves to ensure 25% free seats for poor in all schools

Issue Necessary Rules Under RTE, Govt Told

Dhananjay.Mahapatra
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Holding that the constitutional goal of fraternity can be achieved only when a rickshaw puller's child studies in a school alongside the child of a multi-millionaire or a Supreme Court judge, the apex court Tuesday initiated the exercise to ensure that all schools make available 25% free seats for children from poor and disadvantaged sections, as mandated under Right to Education Act (RTE).

A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and A S Chandurkar said the RTE Act envisages elementary education for all children in a shared institutional space without differentiating them on the basis of caste, class, gender or economic status. Writing the judgment, Justice Narasimha said, "It makes it possible, normatively and structurally, for the child of a multi-millionaire or even of a Judge of the Supreme Court of India to sit in the same classroom and at



AI Image

BEACON OF HOPE

the same bench as the child of an autorickshaw driver or a street vendor: This is the way Section 12 seeks to concretise the constitutional principle of fraternity alongside equality and liberty."

Dispelling the skepticism of many holding the traditional but mistaken view that 'fraternity' is non-enforceable, SC said, "Unlike equality and liberty, which are frequently framed as individual rights-claims, fraternity is relational; it operates through institutional arrangements that enable individuals to 'lose suspect identities' based on caste, class or other hierarchies and to form solidaristic bonds."

"In this sense, the 25% inclusion under Section 12, in unaided neighbourhood schools, is not an isolated welfare measure but a vehicle through which the constitutional commitment to fraternity and the 'development of the child' as recognised in Article 21A and Article 39(f) is sought to be realised," it said. The court also cited the Kothari Commission report's emphasis on the Common School System wherein children from every section of society get equal education without discrimination.

It quoted HRD ministry's statement: "The often-voiced concern about how 25% children from disadvantaged

groups and weaker sections can cope in an environment where rich children exist can be resolved when teaching-learning process and teachers use these children as sources of knowledge so that their esteem and recognition go up and they begin to be treated as equals." The bench said it is necessary and compelling to formulate subordinate legislation by issuing necessary rules and regulations, prescribing the method and manner by which children of weaker and disadvantaged sections are to be admitted in neighbourhood schools.

"We direct the appropriate authorities to prepare and issue, in consultation with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and SCPCRs, as the case may be, as well as the National and State Advisory Councils, necessary rules and regulations under Section 38 of the Act for implementing the mandate of Section 12(1)(c) of the Act," it said.

"We further direct NCPCR to collate information about the issuance of rules and regulations by the states and UTs and file an affidavit before this Court by March 31," the bench said, listing the matter for further hearing on April 6.

25% tariff on countries trading with Iran: Trump

'Help On Way': US Prez Urges Public Uprising

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: Donald Trump has certifiably changed his mind on regime change. On Tuesday, the US president directly encouraged a public uprising in Iran after imposing a blanket 25% tariff on any country that continues to do business with Iran.

The new 25% tariff, effective immediately according to Trump, applies also to New Delhi, which has a 50% tariff burden for its purchase of energy from Russia.

"Iranian Patriots, KEEP PROTESTING—TAKE OVER



State TV quoted an Iran official as saying they had 'a lot of martyrs'

YOUR INSTITUTIONS!!! Save the names of the killers and abusers. They will pay a big price....**HELP IS ON ITS WAY. MIGA!!!**" Trump posted on social media amid reports of a crackdown on protests. NYT quoted a senior Iranian health ministry official as saying that about 3,000 people had been killed across the country.

► **MORE ON PAGE OPP**

Govt expects minimal impact on economy

There was no official Indian response to the tariff announcement, but govt sources said it was likely to have only a minimal impact on India and that trade with Iran was likely to take a hit in any case given the global economic situation. Exporters, barring those dealing in basmati rice, also do not see a significant impact of the US tariff.

But the announcement threatens to complicate India's delicately balanced foreign policy, forcing a choice between preserving access to the \$27 trillion American market and maintaining long-standing ties with Tehran. **P 11**