

Starmer and Xi call for deeper UK-China ties as Trump shakes up global relations

BEIJING, Jan 29 (AP)

THE leaders of Britain and China called Thursday for a “comprehensive strategic partnership” to deepen ties between their nations at a time of growing global uncertainty.

Neither publicly mentioned Donald Trump, but the American President’s challenges to the post-Cold War order was clearly on their minds.

“I think that working together on issues like climate change, global stability during challenging times for the world is precisely what we should be doing as we build this relationship in the way that I’ve described,” Starmer told Xi in his opening remarks.

The two met in the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing as their nations try to improve relations after several years of acrimony. Relations have deteriorated over allegations of Chinese spying in Great Britain, China’s support for Russia in the Ukraine war, and the crackdown on freedoms in Hong Kong, the former British colony that was returned to China in 1997. Starmer is the first British Prime Minister to visit in eight years.

“China-U.K. Relations experienced setbacks in previous years, which was not in the interests of either country,” Xi said. “In the current complex and ever-changing international situation, ... China and the U.K. Need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation to maintain world peace and stability.” Xi also appeared to acknowledge the criticism that Starmer has faced for reaching out to China despite national security and human rights



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, left, shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping ahead of a meeting in Beijing on Thursday.

(AP/PTI)

concerns.

The UK recently approved controversial plans for a huge Chinese Embassy in London, removing a sticking point in relations but also overriding fears that the “mega-embassy” would make it easier for China to conduct espionage and intimidate dissidents.

New Delhi to host India-Arab foreign mantris meet tomorrow

New Delhi: India will host the second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting (IAFMM) on Jan 31. The meeting, which is happening after a gap of 10 years, will be co-chaired by India and the UAE.

"Foreign ministers of other Arab League Member States and Arab League Secretary General will participate in the 2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting," said the govt in an official statement. The meeting takes place ahead of PM Modi's expected visit to Israel late next month.

DEEPENING TIES

At the first FMM in Bahrain in 2016, the ministers had identified five priority verticals of cooperation: economy, energy, education, media and culture and proposed a set of activities across the verticals.

The second India-Arab FMM is expected to build on the existing cooperation, expanding and deepening this partnership. This is the first India-Arab FMM to be hosted by India in New Delhi and will see participation by all 22 Arab countries. The meeting is the highest institutional mechanism driving this partnership, which was formalised in March 2002 when India and League of Arab States signed an MoU institutionalising the process of dialogue.

Saudi, Israeli officials in US to discuss possible strikes on Iran

The Trump administration is hosting senior defence and intelligence officials from Israel and Saudi Arabia for talks on Iran this week as US President Donald Trump considers military strikes, Axios reported on Thursday, citing people familiar with the matter. Reuters could not immediately verify the report. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Uncertainty over the possibility of military action in Iran has lingered after Trump said last week that an "armada" was heading toward the country but that he hoped he would not have to use it. The Israelis travelled to Washington to share intelligence on potential targets inside Iran, while Saudi officials sought to help avert a wider regional war by pushing for a diplomatic solution, the Axios report said.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian that Riyadh would not allow its airspace or territory to be used for military actions.

US forces have moved the USS Abraham Lincoln and several guided-missile destroyers into the Mideast that can be used to launch attacks from the sea.



This handout image from the US Navy shows an EA-18G Growler landing on the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in the Indian Ocean on Jan 23

EU Sanctions 15 Iranian Officials

The European Union Thursday announced sanctions on 15 Iranian officials, including top commanders and officials of the paramilitary Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, over Tehran's deadly crackdown on nationwide protests.

In Iran, plainclothes security forces have rounded up thousands of people in a campaign of mass arrests and intimidation to deter further protests after crushing the bloodiest unrest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, said sources. REUTERS

Jaishankar, Gor discuss 'many dimensions' of ties

NEW DELHI, Jan 29 (IANS)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar met US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor in New Delhi on Thursday, discussing many dimensions of bilateral ties. Welcoming Gor, EAM Jaishankar expressed confidence that he would contribute to strengthening ties between India and the United States.

"Pleased to meet US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor today in New Delhi. Our conversation covered the many dimensions of our partnership. Welcomed him and expressed confidence that he would contribute to the strengthening of India - US relations," EAM Jaishankar posted on X.

Gor on Wednesday described the India-US defence partnership as strong and said that the 10-year pact signed in 2025 will further deepen the ties. He made the statement following his meeting with Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh.

In a post on X, Gor said, "Just last year, the United States and India signed a 10-year defence pact which will significantly deepen our Defence Partnership. Joint exercises will continue, and additional sales are in progress. This is a strong relationship!



Thank you for hosting us, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh." Gor also attended India's Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi, terming it a "celebration of India's Constitution and democratic spirit." "Happy Republic Day, India! Honored to attend the Republic Day Parade for the first time, a celebration of India's Constitution and democratic spirit. Thrilled to see the US-made aircraft soaring in the Indian sky, a powerful symbol of the strength of the US-India strategic partnership," he posted on X.

EAM Jaishankar met a US Congressional delegation comprising Mike Rogers, Adam Smith and Jimmy Patronis, along with Sergio Gor, in New Delhi on January 25 as the both sides discussed strengthening of bilateral ties, developments in the Indo-Pacific region, and the ongoing Ukraine conflict.

India to retain world-beating economic growth rate at 6.8-7.2 pc: Survey

NEW DELHI, Jan 29 (PTI)

INDIA'S economy is projected to grow by 6.8-7.2 per cent in the fiscal year starting April, the Government's pre-Budget Economic Survey said Thursday, reaffirming the country's status as the world's fastest-growing major economy despite trade risks and global volatility clouding the outlook.

The forecast for 2026-27 is slower than the 7.4 per cent projection for the current financial year, driven by consumption and investment.

"The cumulative impact of policy reforms over recent years appears to have lifted the economy's medium-term growth potential closer to 7 per cent", from 6.5-6.8 per cent earlier, the annual report

card on the economy said.

"The outlook, therefore, is one of steady growth amid global uncertainty, requiring caution, but not pessimism."

While the current year GDP growth estimate of 7.4 per cent is higher than the 6.3-6.8 per cent range that the survey had forecast last year, the projection for the next year retains India's world-beating economic expansion despite trade tensions with the US. India, which has been slapped with the highest 50 per cent tariffs on goods it sends to the US, remains one of the few large economies that is yet to sign a trade deal with Washington.

In response to the labour-intensive sector-hurting tariffs, the Modi Government has unleashed policy and

tax reforms, including cutting GST rates, raising the bar for levy of income tax, an overhaul of labour laws to ease compliance burden on businesses, and

(Contd on page 3)

India emerging as ray of hope for world: PM

■ Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, Jan 29

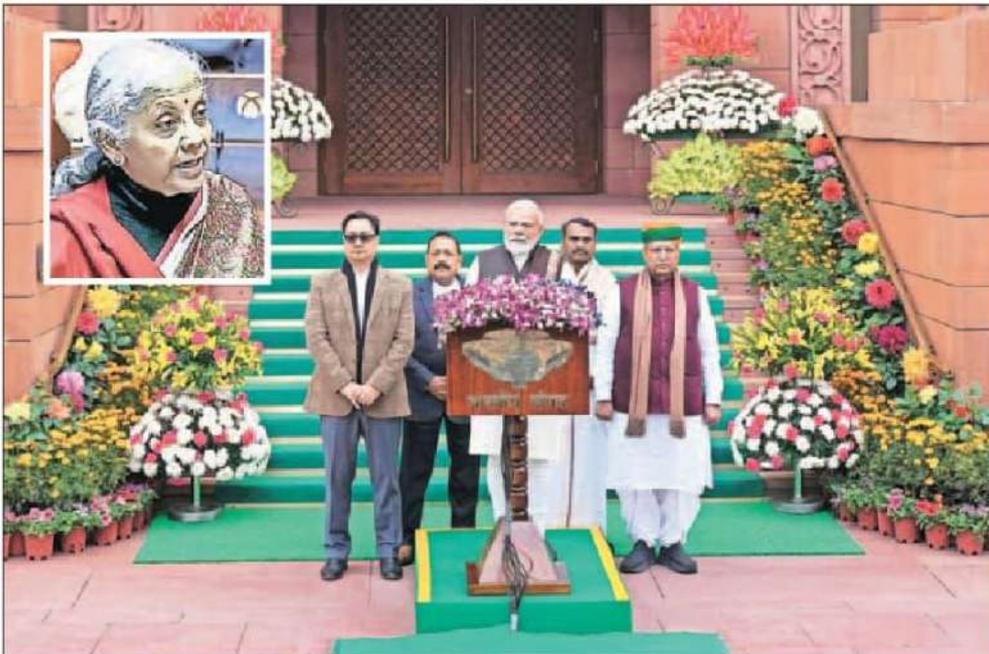
PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asserted that the country was emerging as a "ray of hope" for the world and pointed to the free trade pact with the European Union, saying it for an "ambitious India" and manufacturers should seize this opportunity to enhance capacities.

Addressing the media at the beginning of the Budget session of Parliament, Modi said India was moving rapidly on the Reform Express and thanked parliamentarians for contributing their positive energies to the unveiling of reforms.

Modi said even his critics acknowledge the Government's focus on last-mile delivery and this tradition will continue with the next generation reforms. India's democracy and demography, he said, offer great hope for the world. "In this temple of democracy, India has the opportunity to send a message of strength, commitment to democracy, and respect for decisions taken through democratic processes, messages welcomed and accepted globally," Modi said.

He asserted that the present time is not for disruption but for solutions,

(Contd on page 3)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the media during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Thursday. Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijju and Ministers of State Jitendra Singh, Arjun Ram Meghwal and L. Murugan are also seen. (Inset) Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. (PTI)