

India crude buy helps global mkt stability: Russia

New Delhi: The Russian foreign ministry reiterated on Wednesday that Moscow had no reason to believe India is doing a rethink on its oil purchase from Russia, while also asserting that it's ready to carry forward close cooperation with India in the energy sector.

"We are convinced that India's purchase of Russian hydrocarbons is mutually beneficial & contributes to maintaining stability in the global energy market," the ministry said in a post on X, adding Russia stands ready to continue close cooperation in this area with its Indian partners. Russia had on Tuesday said it had not received any communication from India about Russian oil purchase being stopped.

His comments came a day after US President Trump said PM Modi has "agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the US and, potentially, Venezuela." TNN

EAM meets Rubio as India & US seek to reset strategic ties, eye pact on critical minerals

Delhi's Role Key To Washington's Plan On Opec-Like Arrangement

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: External affairs minister S Jaishankar met US secretary of state Marco Rubio on Wednesday in a deliberate effort by both sides to move ties beyond a narrowly transactional trade agreement and anchor it in longer-term strategic priorities, notably critical minerals, supply chains and the Indo-Pacific.

Coming on the heels of a trade deal that cut US tariffs on Indian goods to around 18%, the talks underscored Washington's push to stabilise — and deepen — ties with New Delhi at a time of global economic and geopolitical churn. Describing the engagement as "a wide-ranging conversation that covered our bilateral cooperation agenda, regional and global issues", Jaishankar signalled continuity in India's approach: prag-

matic, multi-sectoral and increasingly confident.

"Facets of the India-US strategic partnership discussed included trade, energy, nuclear cooperation, defence, critical minerals and technology," Jaishankar said. Both sides agreed on early meetings of various bilateral mechanisms to advance what they called their "shared interests".

The meeting took place ahead of the inaugural Critical Minerals Ministerial, where the US hopes to rally partners around alternative supply chains for what officials call the "oil of the future" — lithium, cobalt and rare earths. The state department said Rubio and Jaishankar discussed formalising bilateral cooperation on critical minerals exploration, mining and processing. Jaishankar underlined challenges of excessive concentration and importance of

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SANDEEP ADHWARYU



de-risking supply chains through structured international cooperation. India's role at the ministerial is central to a

broader US ambition: forging an "Opec-like" arrangement for critical minerals among trusted producers and proces-

sors. The idea is not price-setting in the classical cartel sense, but coordinated investment, standards and supply assurances to dilute China's dominance. For Delhi, participation offers a chance to position itself as a reliable hub in global value chains while accelerating domestic capabilities.

The Jaishankar-Rubio engagement also reflected Washington's attempt to salvage and refocus the strategic narrative. US said the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to expanding cooperation through the Quad and acknowledged that "a prosperous Indo-Pacific region remains vital to advancing our shared interests". Notably, Jaishankar's own public post made no mention of the Quad.

Rubio, in public remarks, spoke of "unlocking new opportunities" between the two democracies. Jaishankar, for his part, framed the talks as part of India's push for a "full strategic partnership". He also held talks with treasury secretary Scott Bessent.

HAL out, Indian pvt firms in fray for 5th-gen fighter jet

New Delhi: India's premier aerospace firm, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, is out of the race to develop India's indigenous 5th-generation fighter jet under Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft programme apparently due to its large order book, reports **Surendra Singh**.

It is learnt that HAL is pre-occupied with a large LCA order and also busy making 156 additional LCHs for the military. Govt wants it to focus on those deliveries.

Of the seven consortia, three shortlisted ones are Tata, L&T (with BEL & Dynamatic Technologies) and Bharat Forge of Kalyani Group (with BEML and Data Patterns). Besides outstanding order books, the selection panel assessed consortia on technical expertise, manufacturing capability, experience and financial strength. The final partner, to be announced in 3 months, will work with the Aeronautical Development Agency to build five AMCA prototypes by 2031 with the ministry's initial allocation of Rs 15,000 crore.

Report: Iran & US to hold N-talks on Friday in Oman

Dubai: Talks between Iran and the US will be held on Friday in Oman, Iranian media reported Wednesday as tensions remain high with Washington after Tehran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month. The semi-official ISNA and Tasnim news agencies, as well as the Student News Network, all reported the talks would take place in Oman, though the sultanate did not acknowledge it would host them. US officials have decided to reject Iran's request to change to location, Axios reported Wednesday.

The US has not acknowledged the talks would take place in Oman, though the White House said it anticipated the talks would take place even after the US shot down an Iranian drone Tuesday. Activists said the number of arrests topped 50,000 in the crackdown, according to US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency. AP

Manipur gets Meitei CM with Kuki, Naga as deputies

Balancing Act In State Riven By Ethnic Violence

Prabin Kalita & Donald Sairem

Guwahati/Imphal: Yumnam Khemchand Singh of BJP was sworn in Wednesday as the CM of Manipur's reinstated NDA govt along with Kuki legislator Nemcha Kipgen and Naga MLA Losii Dikho as his deputies, marking a fresh spin on shared governance in a multi-ethnic state riven by the Meitei-Kuki conflict.

Governor A K Bhalla also administered the oath of office to BJP's Konthoujam Govindas and Khuraijam Loken Singh of NPP as cabinet ministers at the Lok Bhavan ceremony, which ended almost a year of President's rule since N Biren Singh resigned over criticism of the previous govt's handling of the violence that erupted in May 2023.

Khemchand Singh, a former assembly speaker from



Manipur governor Ajay Bhalla congratulates Yumnam Khemchand Singh after the oath event in Imphal

Kuki outfits slam dy CM appointment

Kuki-Zo organisations in Manipur slammed BJP's decision to appoint Nemcha Kipgen, one of 10 MLAs representing the community, as deputy CM, saying it "undermines" their campaign for a separate homeland. **P 13**

the state's majority Meitei community, said there was nothing he wanted more than to fulfil the faith reposed in him by PM Modi and home minister Amit Shah.

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US House passes bill to end partial Government shutdown

WASHINGTON, Feb 4 (AP)

THE House on Tuesday passed a roughly USD 1.2 trillion spending package to end the partial Government shutdown, sending the measure to President Donald Trump and setting the stage for a debate in Congress over Homeland Security funding.

The vote was 217-214, and wraps up congressional work on 11 of the 12 annual appropriations bills, funding the vast majority of the Government for the budget year ending September 30. The last bill still to be worked out covers the Department of Homeland Security where Democrats are demanding more restrictions on enforcement operations.

Trump has said he will sign the bill when it reaches his desk. Speaker Mike Johnson need-



President Donald Trump speaks in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington. (AP/PTI)

ed near-unanimous support from his Republican conference to proceed to a final vote. He nar-

rowly got it during a procedural vote that was held open for nearly an hour as leaders worked to

gain support from a handful of GOP lawmakers who were trying to advance other priorities unrelated to the funding measure. "We have to work through individual members' concerns. That's the game here. It's a consensus building operation. We do it every day," Johnson said.

Trump had weighed in Monday in a social media post, calling on Republicans to stay united and telling holdouts "There can be NO CHANGES at this time."

"We will work together in good faith to address the issues that have been raised, but we cannot have another long, pointless, and destructive Shutdown that will hurt our Country so badly - One that will not benefit Republicans or Democrats. I hope everyone will vote, YES!" Trump wrote on his social media site.

The measure once signed will end the partial Government shutdown that began on Saturday, in addition to funding most of the federal Government through September 30, it includes a short-term funding patch for the Department of Homeland Security through February 13 as lawmakers negotiate potential changes for the agency that enforces the nation's immigration laws - US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE.

The House had previously approved the final package of spending bills, but the Senate broke up that package so that more negotiations could take place for the Homeland Security funding bill. Democrats are demanding changes in response to events in Minneapolis, where two American citizens were shot and killed by federal agents.

US proposes critical minerals trade bloc to counter China

India Among 55 Countries To Have Attended Meeting With Vance

Washington: US Vice President JD Vance on Wednesday unveiled plans to marshal allies into a preferential trade bloc for critical minerals, proposing coordinated price floors as Washington escalates efforts to loosen China's grip on materials crucial to advanced manufacturing. President Donald Trump on Monday launched a strategic stockpile of critical minerals, called Project Vault, backed by \$10 billion in seed funding from the US Export-Import Bank and \$2 billion in private funding.

China has wielded chokehold on the processing of many minerals as geo-economic leverage, at times curbing exports, suppressing prices and undercutting other countries' ability to diversify sources of the materials used to make semiconductors, electric vehicles and advanced weapons.

"We want to eliminate that problem of people flooding into our markets with cheap critical minerals to undercut our domestic manufacturers," Vance told a gathering of visiting ministers without mentioning China. "We will establish reference prices for critical minerals at each stage of production, pricing that reflects real-world fair market value, and for members of the preferential zone, these reference prices will operate as a floor maintained through adjustable tariffs to uphold pricing integrity," he said.



US secretary of state Marco Rubio welcomes VP JD Vance to the stage during the critical minerals ministerial meeting at the state department

Trump says he discussed Iran with Xi as US pushes others to isolate Tehran

Washington: President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he and Chinese President Xi Jinping discussed the situation in Iran in a wide-ranging call that comes as the US administration pushes Beijing and others to isolate Tehran. Trump said the two leaders also discussed a broad range of other critical issues in the US-China relationship, including trade and Taiwan and his plans to visit Beijing in April.

"The relationship with China, and my personal relationship with President Xi, is an extremely good one, and we both realise how important it is to keep it that way," Trump said in a social media post.

The Chinese gov't, in a readout of the call, said the two le-

aders discussed major summits that both nations will host in the coming year and present opportunities for the two leaders to potentially meet. The Chinese statement made no mention of Trump's expected visit to Beijing.

Xi also spoke Wednesday with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Xi's engagement with Trump and Putin comes as the last remaining nuclear arms pact, known as the New START treaty, between Russia and the US is set to expire Thursday, removing any caps on the two largest atomic arsenals for the first time. President Trump has indicated he would like to keep limits on nuclear weapons but wants to involve China in a potential new treaty. AP



South Korea, India, Thailand, Japan, Germany, Australia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo were among the 55 countries that attended the meeting with Vance.

At the meeting, US trade representative Jamieson Greer announced a bilateral plan with Mexico and a trilateral agreement with the European Union and Japan to strengthen critical mineral supply chains and set the stage for a broader agreement with other allies. The plans aim to explore specific measures such as price supports, market standards, subsidies, and guaranteed purchases to encourage production. The US, the EU, and Japan also said they would pursue other avenues.

By guaranteeing minimum prices through coordinated trade rules, Washington hopes to unlock private investment in mining and processing projects that have struggled to compete with cheaper Chinese supply.

China's expanded export controls on rare earths last year caused production delays in Europe and the US. Reacting on the development, China's embassy in Washington said, "China has long played an important role in keeping the global industrial and supply chains of critical minerals safe and stable and is willing to continue to make active efforts in this regard," China's embassy in Washington said. REUTERS