

India joins US-led Pax Silica alliance

PAX SILICA

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NEW DELHI, Feb 20 (PTI)

INDIA on Friday joined the US-led strategic alliance called 'Pax Silica' that aims to build a resilient supply chain for critical minerals and Artificial Intelligence with both sides projecting it as an initiative to cut over-dependence on one country, seen as an oblique apparent reference to China.

US Under Secretary for



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw with Director of the White House Office of S&T Policy, Michael Kratsios, during the signing of the Pax Silica Declaration and the India-US Joint Statement on "AI Opportunity Partnership" on the margins of the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi on Friday. (X/ANI)

Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg, welcoming India to the coalition, flagged challenges arising out of "massive-

ly over-concentrated" supply chains for critical minerals and "threats of economic coercion and blackmail".

Though Helberg didn't name any country, it was almost clear that his remarks were directed at China's export controls on rare earth minerals and related products. China has been controlling the flow of rare earth minerals which have a wide range of applications including in electronics, clean energy, aerospace, automotive, and defence sectors.

Pax Silica was launched in December to build a secure, resilient, and innovation-driven supply chain for critical minerals and Artificial Intelligence (AI). The Pax Silica Summit was held in Washington on December 12 where partner nations signed the Pax Silica declaration. The member nations of the Pax Silica included Australia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Singapore, the United Arab

Emirates and the United Kingdom. US Ambassador Sergio Gor, welcoming India to Pax-Silica, said the country brings strength to the coalition. "Policies that will reinforce US-India tech coopera-

tion will power AI innovation and adoption for years to come. We can share trusted AI technology with the world and especially with partners like India," he said.

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PM discusses potential of harnessing AI with CEOs of AI, deeptech startups



NASA conducts 2nd rocket fuelling test

Test will decide when Artemis astronauts head to Moon

■ By Marcia Dunnap

CAPE CANAVERAL, Feb 20 (AP)

NASA took another crack at fuelling its giant moon rocket on Thursday after leaks halted the initial dress rehearsal and delayed the first lunar trip by astronauts in more than half a century. For the second time this month, launch teams pumped more than 7,00,000 gallons (2.6 million liters) of supercold fuel into the rocket atop its launch pad. They counted all the way down to the half-minute mark as planned, then turned back the clocks to run through the final 10 minutes again. NASA completed the test late at night and said there was minimal hydrogen leakage, well within safety limits.



It was the most critical and challenging part of the two-day practice countdown. Engineers were analysing the data, with the outcome determining whether a March launch is possible for the Artemis II Moon mission with four astronauts.

In a positive sign, the US-Canadian crew prepared to enter a two-week quarantine period Friday to provide what NASA called flexibility within the March launch window.

Trump warns of 'bad things' if Iran doesn't make deal as US carrier nears Middle East

■ By Jon Gambrell
DUBAI, Feb 20 (AP)

IRAN held annual military drills with Russia on Thursday as a second American aircraft carrier drew closer to the Middle East, with both the United States and Iran signalling they are prepared for war if talks on Tehran's nuclear program fizzle out.

President Donald Trump has said he hopes to reach a deal with Iran, but the talks have been deadlocked for years, and Iran has refused to discuss wider US and Israeli demands that it scale back its missile program and sever ties to armed groups. Indirect talks held in recent weeks made little visible progress, and one or both sides could be buying time for final war preparations.

Iran's theocracy is more vulnerable than ever, following 12 days of Israeli and US strikes on its nuclear sites and military last year, as well as mass protests in January that were violently suppressed. But it is still capable of striking Israel and US bases in the

region, and has warned that any attack would trigger a regional war.

Iran earlier this week launched a drill that involved live-fire in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow opening of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of the world's traded oil passes.

Tensions are also rising inside Iran, as mourners hold ceremonies honouring slain protesters 40 days after their killing by security forces. Some gatherings have seen anti-government chants despite threats from authorities.

Iran warns of 'decisive' response if subjected to military aggression

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 20 (IANS)

IRAN will respond "decisively and proportionately" to any military aggression, exercising its right to self-defence under the UN Charter, its UN ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani said in a letter to the secretary-general and the president of the Security Council.

Citing US President Donald Trump's recent remarks on Diego Garcia, Iravani wrote: "In such circumstances, all bases, facilities, and

assets of the hostile force in the region would constitute legitimate targets in the context of Iran's defensive response. The United States would bear full and direct responsibility for any unpredictable and uncontrolled consequences."

Trump on Wednesday called Britain's lease of Diego Garcia, a key US-British military base in the Indian Ocean Chagos archipelago, a "big mistake," noting it "may be necessary for the US to use Diego Garcia" if nuclear talks with Iran fail.

US SC strikes down Trump's sweeping tariffs

WASHINGTON, Feb 20 (Agencies)

IN A major blow to US President Donald Trump's signature economic policy, the US Supreme Court on Friday invalidated most of his sweeping tariff measures.

According to 'The Washington Post', the US Apex court held that the US President did not possess the authority under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose extensive import duties on goods from nearly all US trading partners.

The 6-3 decision centres on tariffs imposed under an emer-

gency powers law, including the sweeping "reciprocal" tariffs he levied on nearly every other country.

It's the first major piece of Trump's broad agenda to come squarely before the nation's highest court, which he helped shape with the appointments of three conservative jurists in his first term.

The majority found that the Constitution "very clearly" gives Congress the power to impose taxes, which include tariffs. "The Framers did not vest any part of the taxing power in the Executive Branch," Chief Justice John



US President did not possess the authority to impose extensive import duties on goods from nearly all US trading partners, rules the court

Roberts wrote. Justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas and Brett Kavanaugh dissented.

"The tariffs at issue here may or may not be wise policy. But as

a matter of text, history, and precedent, they are clearly lawful," Kavanaugh wrote in the dissent.

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Ashamed of SC ruling: Trump Slaps 10% extra global tariffs, says, no change in India-US trade deal

WASHINGTON, Feb 20 (Agencies)

"THE Supreme Court's ruling is 'deeply disappointing' and I am ashamed of certain members of the court for not having the courage to do what is right for our country," Trump said at the White House media briefing on Friday.

"Their decision is incorrect," he said. Furious about the defeat, Trump said he will impose a global 10 per cent tariff (Contd on page 3)