

Looking to help exporters at insurance front to deal West Asia crisis: Goyal

NEW DELHI, Mar 10 (PTI)

COMMERCE and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said the Government is looking to extend help to exporters on the insurance front to help them deal with the ongoing West Asia crisis.

He said an inter-Ministerial group is keeping tabs on developments on a daily basis and is interacting with exporters.

The Customs department has come out with norms for dealing with export cargo returning to Indian ports due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and disruptions in maritime routes amid the West Asia crisis.

"Similarly, we are looking for developing some new schemes like insurance support we are consulting ECGC (Export Credit Guarantee Corporation) and oth-



er departments on that," Goyal told reporters here.

He said the Government is looking at ways to help exporters whose goods have been shipped but are facing problems. The Government is monitoring the situation 24 hours, he added.

Exporters are facing issues due to a joint attack launched by the US and Israel on Iran. It has led to a spike in ocean freight, air transport, and insurance premiums because of disruptions in the movement of oil and gas consignments.

West Asia is a major export destination for India.

Meanwhile, speaking at Aahar show, he said India should aspire to become a top exporter of agri and processed food sectors.

At present, India is the seventh-largest exporter of the world. Agriculture and fish exports stood around Rs 5 lakh crore.

Goyal also said the nine free trade agreements (FTAs) finalised by India have opened huge export opportunities for Indian goods.

"We are now finalising an agreement with Canada. We have just launched discussions with the six nations, GCC group of countries, in the Middle East. All of this provides huge opportunities for friends from the processed food and agri sector," the Minister said.

Iran war costs \$5.6 bn to US in first 2 days

WASHINGTON, Mar 10 (IANS)

THE first two days of US military strikes on Iran cost about \$5.6 billion in munitions alone, according to a report by 'The Washington Post', underscoring the enormous financial cost of the conflict even as President Donald Trump suggests the war could end soon.

The estimate, based on information shared with Congress, reflects the value of advanced weapons used in the opening phase of the campaign and has intensified debate in Washington about how long the United States can sustain such a high-intensity military operation.

According to US officials cit-

ed by 'The Washington Post', the Pentagon burned through roughly \$5.6 billion worth of munitions during the initial assault, raising concerns among lawmakers that American forces are rapidly consuming scarce stocks of advanced weaponry.

The figure covers only the first two days of combat and does not include the broader operational costs of deploying forces, maintaining aircraft and naval assets, or sustaining troops in the region, the daily said. Officials told the newspaper the estimate was shared with Congress as the administration prepares to seek additional funding to sustain the military campaign.

The financial toll comes as US

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forces have launched thousands of strikes across Iran since the operation began.

The pace of strikes has already raised concerns on Capitol Hill that the US military could deplete its stockpiles of high-end muni-

tions, 'The Washington Post' reported. Officials also warned that an extended conflict could strain inventories already affected by years of supplying weapons to Ukraine and maintaining military commitments in Asia.

Some US defence planners have begun shifting resources from other regions to sustain the Middle East operation. According to the newspaper, parts of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) missile defence system have been moved from South Korea to the region.

The Pentagon has also drawn from stocks of advanced Patriot interceptors to strengthen defences against Iranian drone and ballistic missile attacks.

Defence experts say such moves carry strategic risks. Mark Cancian, who tracks US weapons inventories, warned that diverting air-defence systems could weaken American readiness in other theatres.

"The more THAADs and Patriots you shoot, the more risk you assume in the Indo-Pacific and in Ukraine," he said, according to 'The Washington Post'.

The conflict has also resulted in casualties. Seven American service members have died since the war began, including six killed in an Iranian drone strike in Kuwait and another who died after being wounded in an attack in Saudi Arabia, according to US officials cited in media reports.

Hypocritical, flagrant violation

India slams Pak airstrikes on Afghanistan

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 10 (PTI)

INDIA has condemned Pakistan's airstrikes on Afghanistan as a "flagrant violation" of international law, saying it is "hypocritical" to invoke Islamic solidarity while carrying out attacks that killed civilians during Ramzan.

Addressing a Security Council meeting on the situation in Afghanistan on Monday, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni reiterated New Delhi's support for the UN Secretary-General's call for compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law, and for ensuring the protection of civilians.

"India strongly condemns the airstrikes on Afghan territory which are flagrant violations of international law and the UN Charter and the principle of state sovereignty.

"It is hypocritical to espouse high principles of international law and Islamic solidarity on the

"It is hypocritical to espouse high principles of international law and Islamic solidarity on the one hand, while mercilessly carrying out air strikes during the holy month of Ramzan that have killed 185 innocent civilians as of March 6," said Harish Parvathaneni, India's Permanent Representative to UN Ambassador, addressing a Security Council meeting on the situation in Afghanistan

one hand, while mercilessly carrying out air strikes during the holy month of Ramzan that have killed 185 innocent civilians as of March 6," he said.

According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), around

55 percent of the 185 victims were women and children, and more than 100,000 people have been displaced due to the attacks.

Parvathaneni expressed "grave concern on the practice of trade and transit terrorism by denial of passage for trade and cynical closure of access" to Afghanistan, a landlocked country.

"While we condemn these acts, we reaffirm our support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Afghanistan," the envoy said.

He said terrorism continues to remain a global scourge afflicting humanity and stressed the need for coordinated international efforts to ensure that groups such as ISIL and Al-Qaeda and their affiliates, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and their proxies, do not carry out cross-border terrorism. The diplomat said the political situation in Afghanistan has changed over the last four years and urged the UN sanctions system to be reviewed.

Iran launches new attacks targeting Israel, Gulf countries

Seeks to ramp up pressure on US

DUBAI, Mar 10 (AP)

IRAN launched new attacks on Tuesday on Israel and Gulf Arab countries as it kept up pressure on the Middle East in a war started by Israel and the United States that has sent oil prices surging and stunned global economies.

Sirens warned of incoming missiles in the futuristic business hub of Dubai, and in Bahrain, authorities said an Iranian attack hit a residential building in the capital, killing a 29-year-old woman and wounding eight others. Saudi Arabia said it destroyed two drones over its oil-rich eastern region, and

Kuwait's National Guard said it shot down six drones. Later in the morning, sirens also sounded in Jerusalem, and sounds of explosions could be heard in Tel Aviv as Israel's defence systems worked to intercept incoming fire, not long after the military said it detected an Iranian missile launch.

"We are definitely not looking for a ceasefire," Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, wrote on X. "We believe that the aggressor should be punched in the mouth so that he learns a lesson so that he will never think of attacking our beloved Iran again." Another top Iranian

security official, Ali Larijani, appeared to threaten US President Donald Trump himself, writing on X that "I don't fear your empty threats. Even those bigger than you couldn't eliminate Iran. Be careful not to get eliminated yourself." Iran has been accused of plotting attempts to kill Trump in the past.

Witnesses reported hearing several explosions in Tehran in the afternoon as Israel commenced a new wave of airstrikes. Attacks aimed at pressuring the US: Along with firing missiles and drones at Israel and at American bases in the region, Iran has also been targeting energy infrastructure and traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for traded oil,



Smoke rises following an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyyeh, Beirut's southern suburbs, Lebanon on Monday.

(AP)

sending oil prices soaring. The attacks appear aimed at generating enough global economic pain to pressure the US and Israel to end their strikes. Brent crude, the international standard, spiked to nearly USD 120 on Monday before falling back, but was still at around USD 90 a barrel on Tuesday, nearly 24 per cent higher than when the war started on Feb. 28. Still, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed the strikes on Iran would continue. "Our aim is to bring the Iranian people to cast off the yoke of tyranny, (but) ultimately it depends on them," Netanyahu said during a meeting with Israel's hospital and health system leaders. "There is no doubt that with the actions

taken so far, we are breaking their bones." Oil is rerouted as the Strait of Hormuz is largely cut off: Iran has effectively stopped tankers from using the Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman - the gateway to the Indian Ocean - through which 20 per cent of the world's oil is carried. Attacks on merchant ships near the strait have killed at least seven sailors, according to the International Maritime Organisation. A bulk carrier likely came under attack in the Persian Gulf on Tuesday off the coast of the UAE, with the captain reporting a splash and a loud bang nearby, according to a monitoring centre run by the British military.

RSP to pursue 'development diplomacy' to boost Nepal-India ties: Party chief

KATHMANDU, Mar 10 (PTI)

RASTRIYA Swatantra Party (RSP) chief Rabi Lamichhane has said he looked forward to strengthening Nepal-India ties through "development diplomacy" as he thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for wishing him on the party's electoral success.

The RSP, formed in 2022, has won 125 of the 165 seats under direct voting in Nepal's parliamentary polls as vote counting under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system concluded on Tuesday, putting it in a position to form a majority government.

The party bagged 4,974,957

votes so far under the proportional representation system.

In a social media post on Monday, Lamichhane thanked Prime Minister Modi for his warm wishes and for "recognising the democratic mandate of the Nepali people".

"RSP and our government will remain dedicated to fostering a relationship built on mutual respect and shared prosperity where RSP will prioritise 'development diplomacy'," he said.

"We look forward to a partnership with India that scales new heights through cooperation in connectivity, cultural tourism, energy, and trade,

ensuring a prosperous future for the people of both countries," the RSP leader said.

He said that enhanced cooperation between the two neighbours would help ensure a prosperous future for the people of both countries.

Congratulating Lamichhane and Balendra Shah for their election victory, Modi on Monday conveyed India's commitment to work with them for the mutual prosperity, progress and well-being of the two countries.

Shah is all set to become Nepal's first Madhesi Prime Minister and also the youngest elected executive head.