

We need to recognise we have problem with Security Council: UN chief Guterres

■ By Yoshita Singh

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 15 (PTI)

IN A sharp critique, UN chief Antonio Guterres said there is a need to recognise “we have a problem with the Security Council”, which does not reflect the current world and is not allowed to stop conflicts because of the use of veto by its permanent members.

“I think we need to recognise that we have a problem with the Security Council. The Security Council today no longer represents the world as the world exists. It represents the world



after 1945,” Guterres said at a press conference in Beirut on Saturday in response to a question. He pointed out that three permanent members of the 15-nation Council are from Europe,

one from Asia, and one is the United States, while there are no permanent members from Africa or Latin America.

Even from Asia, that “obviously is a continent with an enormous

weight in global population and global wealth”, there is just one permanent member - China.

“And so, the Council has a problem of legitimacy and a problem of efficiency because of the vetoes. And what we have witnessed is that time and time again, when we have situations of conflict and when it’s necessary to stop the conflict, there is a veto that emerges, and that does not allow the Security Council to act. That, unfortunately, is something that we are witnessing time and time again, and I am not hoping that in the short term, things will change,” he said.

EAM Jaishankar starts two-day visit to Brussels

NEW DELHI, Mar 15 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday



kick-started a two-day visit to Brussels for talks with his counterparts from mem-

ber states of 27-nation European Union.

It is the first high-level visit from India to Brussels headquartered EU after the two sides firmed up a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in January.

The External Affairs Ministry said Jaishankar is travelling to the capital of Belgium at the invitation of EU High Representative and Vice President Kaja Kallas to interact with foreign ministers of the 27 member States of the bloc at its Foreign Affairs Council Meeting.

“During the visit, the External Affairs Minister will also hold meetings with the leadership of the European Union, and his counterparts from Belgium and other EU member States,” the Ministry said.

“The visit of the External Affairs Minister coming soon after the historic 16th India-EU summit is expected to further deepen India’s strategic partnership with the European Union,” it said in a brief statement.

Thousands take part in anti-war protests in Italy, Spain

High-stakes referendum on Italian judges looms

■ By Silvia Stellacci and
Derek Gatopoulos

ROME, Mar 15 (AP)

THOUSANDS of people protested on Saturday against wars in the Middle East and judicial reforms proposed by Italy's conservative government - linking international tensions with a growing domestic political battle before a national referendum.

The March 22-23 referendum on changes to the judicial system has become a major political test for Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government, which faces an election next year. The debate over legal reforms has



People take part in a national demonstration against the war in Iran and the March 22 referendum on the Italian justice system, in Rome, Saturday. (AP/PTI)

escalated into a broader confrontation between the Prime Minister and her political opponents. In central Rome, protesters waving red trade union banners and Palestinian and Cuban flags chanted "Meloni government, resign" before the rally ended peacefully.

"The US and Israel are destroying any form of coexistence dictated by international law," demonstrator Sandra Paganini said. "They are dragging us towards a world war in which they are targeting completely innocent people who have done nothing wrong, intervening and destroying nations," she said.

After quieter weeks, Taiwan reports large-scale Chinese military aircraft presence near island

■ By Kanis Leung
HONG KONG, Mar 15 (AP)

TAIWAN saw a surge of Chinese military planes near the island, its Defence Ministry said on Sunday, after a sharp drop in flights over the past two weeks had sparked discussions among observers.

The Ministry detected 26 Chinese military aircraft around the island on Saturday, with 16 of them entering its central and southwestern Air Defence Identification Zone. Seven naval ships were spotted around the island, it reported. The increased number of aircraft came after the



ministry reported a fall that left analysts scratching their heads about what China's military may be up to.

Taiwan didn't report any Chinese military planes that went

beyond the median line and entered the zone for a week from February 27 to March 5. After two were detected on March 6, the next four days had none. Such flights resumed in small numbers

between Wednesday and Friday.

The drop coincided with the annual meeting of China's legislature. While such flights have fallen in the past during major events and public holidays, this year's fall was more prominent than in the past.

Analysts said the meeting could not be the sole reason behind the recent drop. Another potential factor could be a desire to calm the waters with Washington weeks before a visit by US President Donald Trump. The White House has said that Trump would travel to China from March 31 to April 2, though Beijing has not officially confirmed that.

'India to become 3rd largest economy soon'

NEW DELHI, Mar 15 (IANS)

THE Bharat Progress Report 2025-26, released by the NXT Foundation, highlights India's rapid economic and technological growth over the year with the achievement of as many as 101 major milestones across digital public infrastructure, highways, railways, space, and renewable energy, taking the country towards the goal of becoming a developed nation.

The report underscores that India became the world's fourth-largest economy in

2025, overtaking Japan with a nominal GDP of about \$4.18 trillion. Driven by a robust 8.2 per cent growth rate, India continues to be the world's fastest-growing major economy. The country is now on course to soon become the third-largest economy in the world.

The report points to several high-frequency indicators that reflect the economic growth momentum. GST collections reached a record Rs 2.17 lakh crore in April 2025, while the country's mutual fund industry surpassed Rs 80 lakh crore in assets under man-



Report highlights 101 major milestones across digital public infra, highways, railways, space, and renewable energy

agement. Besides, cumulative foreign direct investment crossed \$1.15 trillion with the surge in investor confidence.

The development of India's digital public infrastructure, which is being adopted by other countries as well, is reflected in the monthly UPI transactions surpassing Rs 21 lakh crore, while Aadhaar authentication crossed one billion. This enabled the expansion of financial inclusion in the country with a marked improvement in the delivery of government services to the poor

(Contd on page 5)

EC announces polls for 4 States, 1 UT

Assembly polls in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry on April 9, in TN on April 23 and in 2 phases in W Bengal on April 23 and 29

Counting of votes for all polls on May 4

NEW DELHI, Mar 15 (PTI)

ASEMBLY elections in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry will be held on a single day on April 9, in Tamil Nadu on April 23 and in two phases in West Bengal on April 23 and 29, while votes will be counted for all polls on May 4, the Election Commission announced on Sunday.

Compared to eight voting days spread across almost a month in 2021, there will be three polling days in a 20-day period in these elections, which will see the BJP trying to retain power in Assam, while it will be pitted against ruling parties in West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Puducherry is governed by NDA partner All India N R Congress.

A total of 17.4 crore voters are eligible to vote in the elections



Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar (C) with Election Commissioners S S Sandhu (L) and Vivek Joshi during a press conference to announce the Assembly elections schedule at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Sunday. (PTI)

to five Assemblies with 824 constituencies, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said at a press conference here.

"Voting for all seats in Assam will be held on April 9. Voting in

West Bengal will take place in two phases on April 23 and April 29. "The voting for all seats in Kerala and Puducherry will take place on April 9, while all Tamil

(Contd on page 5)

By-polls to 8 Assembly seats on Apr 9 and 23; counting on May 4

By-polls in all eight constituencies were necessitated due to death of sitting MLAs

NEW DELHI, Mar 15 (PTI)

BY-POLLS to five Assembly seats in Goa, Karnataka, Nagaland and Tripura will be held on April 9 and in another three constituencies of Gujarat and Maharashtra on April 23, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gynaesh Kumar

announced on Sunday.

Addressing a press conference for announcement of poll schedule, Kumar said the counting of votes for bye-elections will be held on May 4 for all eight constituencies.

The by-polls in all eight constituencies were necessitated due to death of sitting MLAs.

The eight constituencies are: Ponda in Goa, Bagalkot and Davnagere South in Karnataka, Koridang in Nagaland, Dharmanagar in Tripura, Umreth in Gujarat, and Rahuri and Baramati in Maharashtra.

EAM speaks to Saudi, UAE counterparts on W Asia crisis

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India's continued engagement with the Gulf saw external affairs minister S Jaishankar speaking to his Saudi Arabia and UAE counterparts on the regional situation and latest developments in the conflict in the West Asia region.

The minister has spoken to his counterparts from all GCC countries since the military conflict started on Feb 28, calling for resolving all issues through dialogue and emphasising the well-being of the Indian diaspora.

Jaishankar is currently on a visit to Brussels from March 15-16 at the invitation of EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas to interact with foreign ministers of the 27 EU



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member states at the Foreign Affairs Council Meeting.

During the visit, Jaishankar will also hold meetings with the leadership of the EU, and his counterparts from Belgium and other EU member states. This is the first high-level bilateral visit from either side since the two sides finalised a free trade agreement in Jan this year.

The visit is taking place in the middle of the raging war in the West Asia region.

Jaishankar and Kallas had spoken earlier to discuss issues related to the conflict. The Indian minister is likely to stress on the need for an early end to the conflict in his engagements with his European counterparts.

"The visit of the foreign minister coming soon after the historic 16th India-EU Summit is expected to further deepen India's strategic partnership with the EU," said the MEA said in a statement.