

'India strengthening its role as reliable semiconductor supplier'



SANAND, Mar 31 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Kaynes Semicon's outsourced semiconductor assembly and test facility at Sanand on Tuesday and said India is strengthening its role as a reliable semiconductor supplier in the global market. He said the inauguration of the facility strengthens India's push towards self-reliance, which marks a landmark step in building a robust semiconductor ecosystem. Modi said India's decision to join the Pax Silica initiative aims to strengthen the supply of critical minerals. Calling the development a moment of pride as an Indian company has joined the global semiconductor supply chain, Modi said this is not just the time of economic competition but a time to shape the future tech landscape.

East, central and N-W India to witness more heatwave days than usual: IMD

NEW DELHI, Mar 31 (PTI)

ABOVE-NORMAL heatwave days are likely over some parts of east, central and North-West India and the South-East Peninsula between April and June even as above-normal rainfall is expected in April, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in its monthly forecast on Tuesday.

Between April and June, maximum temperatures are expected to be normal to below normal over many parts of the country except most parts of East and North-East India, as well as Eastern parts of central India and adjoining peninsular regions where above-normal maximum temperatures are expected.

“During the hot season (April-May-June), above-normal minimum temperatures are likely over most parts of the country except some regions of Maharashtra and Telangana, where normal to below normal minimum temperatures are likely,” said the IMD.

The department also stated that in April, monthly maximum temperatures are likely to be normal to below normal over many parts of the country.

Pak-Afghan 'jirga' calls for ceasefire

PESHAWAR, Mar 31 (PTI)

A JOINT Pakistan-Afghanistan 'jirga' here on Tuesday called for an immediate ceasefire to ease the rising tensions between the two neighbours. A jirga is an assembly of elders and community leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan that resolves disputes based on consensus. The declaration was issued at the conclusion of the jirga, which was attended by former Governors, political leaders, ex-diplomats, tribal elders, intellectuals, and religious scholars.

The participants emphasised that both countries must ensure their territories are not used against each other under any circumstances. "No individual or group should be allowed to use either country's soil for hostile activities," the official statement issued said. The jirga urged Governments of both nations to fully utilise their state capacity to implement mutually agreed decisions to maintain peace.

IAF inks Rs 1,950 cr deal for 2 radars

NEW DELHI, Mar 31 (PTI)

THE Defence Ministry on Tuesday inked a Rs 1,950 crore contract with State-run Bharat Electronics Limited for the procurement of two mountain radars and related infrastructure for the Indian Air Force.

The installation and commissioning of these radars will boost the country's air defence and strengthen national security, the ministry said, adding the procurement will also reduce the dependency on foreign equipment.

"The Ministry of Defence has inked a major capital acquisition contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for the procurement of two mountain radars, including associated equipment and required infrastructure for the Indian Air Force, at a cost of around

Rs 1,950 crore," an official statement said. This mountain radar is indigenously designed and developed by Electronics and Radar Development Establishment of DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) and will be manufactured by BEL.



Russian ship carrying oil docks in Cuba

First oil tanker in 3 months

HAVANA, Mar 31 (AP)

THE Russian vessel Anatoly Kolodkin docked on Tuesday at the Cuban port of Matanzas laden with 730,000 barrels of oil, marking the first time in three months that an oil tanker reached the island.

The administration of Trump had allowed the shipment to proceed despite its ongoing energy blockade. Cubans, including Energy and Mines Minister Vicente de la O Levy, cheered the ship's arrival. A shortage of petroleum has exacerbated a deep economic crisis that has left the population mired in long blackouts and facing a severe short-

age of food and medicine. "Our gratitude to the Government and People of Russia for all the support we are receiving. A valuable shipment that arrives amidst the complex energy situation we are facing," de la O Levy said. Cuba produces barely 40 per cent of its required fuel and relies on imports to sustain its energy grid. Experts say the anticipated shipment could produce about 180,000 barrels of diesel, enough to feed Cuba's daily demand for nine or 10 days. "The arrival of an oil tanker to a country has likely never generated so much news as the Russian one to Cuba," wrote Cuban Dy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio.

Asia hit hardest by recent energy shocks

Nations competing for Russian crude oil

BANGKOK, Mar 31 (AP)

ASIAN nations are increasingly competing for Russian crude oil as an energy crisis mounts amid the month-old war by the US and Israel against Iran, which has choked off roughly a fifth of the world's oil supply.

Much of the oil from the mostly shut Strait of Hormuz was headed for Asia, hit hardest by recent energy shocks. Over the weekend, Iran-backed Houthi rebels entered the conflict, further threatening shipping.

To shore up global crude oil supplies, the US has temporarily eased sanctions on Russian oil shipments already at sea -

first for India, then for the rest of the world.

Demand is rising in Asia while Russia is raking in billions of dollars. But experts say there is a limit to how much Moscow can boost its exports of crude oil, which is unrefined petroleum needed to make fuels like gasoline and diesel, and it is already exporting at a level close to its previous peak.

In addition, Russia's 4-year-old full-scale invasion of Ukraine and recent drone attacks on its energy facilities by Kyiv are hurting its export capabilities.

For desperate countries in Asia the opportunity is short-lived and shrinking, said Muyu Xu, a

senior crude oil analyst at the global trade data firm Kpler.

"The real problem is how much cargo is still available in this market," she said.

Before the Iran war, China, India and Turkey were the main importers of Russian oil, flouting Western sanctions for a healthy discount. US and European Union sanctions were meant to economically hinder Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. But the US sanction waiver sent energy-hungry Southeast Asia into a flurry. This month, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam signalled new interest in Russian oil.

Manila, a long-time US ally,

imported Russian crude for the first time in five years - days after it declared an energy emergency.

Others may follow, but will compete with China and India for roughly 126 million barrels still at sea, according to Kpler.

India alone typically needs 5.5 million to 6 million barrels of oil per day. Analysts say Russia is unlikely to boost exports sharply. In March, flows were about 3.8 million barrels a day, above February's 3.2 million but still below the mid-2023 peak of 3.9 million.

Xu said the crisis was a reminder of how quickly geopolitics can shift - sometimes driven by just a few decision-mak-

ers - making it hard for countries to plan ahead. She said "right now, really the priority is to ensure your supply and all the other considerations are secondary."

Southeast Asian countries competing for the dwindling amount of Russian crude oil at sea are likely hoping the US extends its sanction waiver beyond April, Xu added.

The options are limited for these nations, and safer bets - like crude oil from the US, South America or West Africa - are too far for Asia, meaning shipments won't arrive for months. That leaves poorer nations scrambling.

Trump willing to end war without reopening Hormuz: WSJ

WASHINGTON, Mar 31 (PTI)

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has told his aides that he's willing to end the military operation against Iran even if the Strait of Hormuz remains largely closed,

"US expects to complete its military objectives against Iran in weeks, not months." Outlining Washington's conditions for ending the conflict, Secretary of State Marco Rubio warns Tehran against attempting to control key global waterways

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said the President and the chief of the Pentagon have always stated a four to six-week estimated timeline for the military operation. "We're on day 30 today," she said.

Leavitt also indicated that the Arab countries can be asked to share the burden of the military operation in Iran. "I think it's something the President would be quite interested in. I won't get

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China, Pak propose peace plan

By K J M Varma
BEIJING, Mar 31 (PTI)

CHINA and Pakistan on Tuesday put forward a five-point peace proposal to end the West Asia war, including a call for safe passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz.

The peace proposal was put forward after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks on the Iran situation with visiting Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar.

Dar arrived here to brief Wang about his recent talks with the Foreign Ministers of Türkiye,

Egypt and Saudi Arabia to promote talks between the US and Iran to end the ongoing conflict.

After Dar-Wang talks, the two countries put forward five proposals on restoring peace and stability in the Gulf region and West Asia, as well as safe passage through the Strait.

The proposals included the immediate cessation of hostilities, initiation of peace talks as soon as possible, ensuring the safety of non-military targets and safety of navigation, and safeguarding the primacy of the UN Charter.

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leaving the campaign to reopen for a later date, the Wall Street Journal reported, citing administration officials.

In recent days, Trump and his aides assessed that a mission to pry open the chokepoint would push the conflict beyond his timeline of four to six weeks, the Daily said in a report.

According to the report, Trump decided that the US should achieve its main goals of hobbling Iran's navy and its missile stocks and wind down current hostilities while pressuring Tehran diplomatically to resume the free flow of trade. If that fails, Washington would press allies in Europe and the Gulf to take the lead on reopening the strait, the WSJ said, quoting officials.

At a media briefing on Monday,

US strikes city home to Iranian nuclear site while Tehran hits oil tanker off Dubai coast

By Jon Gambrell and David Rising
DUBAI, Mar 31 (AP)



Smoke rises following an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyeh, Beirut's southern suburbs, Lebanon, on Monday. (AP/PTI)

US STRIKES hit a city on Tuesday that is home to one of Iran's main nuclear sites, sending a massive fireball into the sky, and Tehran attacked a fully loaded Kuwaiti oil tanker in the Persian Gulf.

The attacks were a testament to the intensity of the war more than a month after the US and Israel launched their first strikes.

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