

Iran closes Strait of Hormuz again over US blockade

ACCUSES US OF VIOLATING DEAL TO REOPEN IT



An ambulance belonging to Hezbollah's health unit lies amid the rubble of a medical center destroyed in an Israeli airstrike in Jibchit, southern Lebanon. (PTI)

■ By Sam Metz and
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CAIRO, Apr 18 (AP)

THE stand-off over the Strait of Hormuz quickly escalated again on Saturday as Iran reversed its reopening of the crucial waterway and fired on ships attempting to pass, in retaliation after the United States pressed ahead with its blockade choking off Iranian ports.

Confusion over the strait, through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil passes, threatened to deepen the energy crisis roiling the global economy and push the two countries toward renewed conflict. The ceasefire between them is due to run out by mid-next week, and Pakistani mediators were working to put together a new round of direct negotiations to keep the truce going.

Iran's joint military command said Saturday that "control of the Strait of Hormuz has returned to its previous state ... Under strict management and control of the armed forces." It warned that it would continue to block transit through the strait as long as the US blockade of Iranian ports remained in effect.

Revolutionary Guard gunboats on Saturday opened fire on a tanker transiting the strait

and an unknown projectile hit a container vessel, damaging some of the containers, the British military's UK Maritime Trade Operations centre said without identifying the vessels. TankerTrackers.Com reported that two Indian-flagged vessels were forced to turn around after being fired on by Iran, including a supertanker carrying Iraqi oil.

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India summons Iran envoy over incident of firing at ships in Strait

NEW DELHI, Apr 18 (PTI)

INDIA on Saturday summoned Iranian envoy Mohammad Fathali after two Indian vessels had to reverse course in the Strait of Hormuz following an incident of firing by Iran's Revolutionary Guards, authoritative sources said. A strong protest was lodged with the Ambassador over the incident, they said.

There is no official word yet on summoning Fathali to the External Affairs Ministry.

Several commercial vessels tried to cross the Strait of Hormuz after Iran on Friday announced that it has opened the waterway for commercial traffic. A vessel tracker reported that two Indian vessels had to reverse course in the Strait of Hormuz following reports of gunfire from Iran's

Revolutionary Guard. The vessels include an Indian-flagged super tanker, carrying 2 million barrels of Iraqi oil, it said. 14 INDIA-BOUND SHIPS TRYING TO CROSS STRAIT BY IRAN; 1 HIT BY BULLETS, 1 CROSSES, SAY SOURCES: A CONVOY OF 14 India-bound ships carrying crude oil and gas were stopped by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) by firing at two of them while they were transiting the Strait of Hormuz, leading to 13 of the vessels returning to different locations in the Persian Gulf, official sources privy to the development said.

An Indian-flag carrying ship, which was hit by bullets fired by the IRGC while crossing the Strait of Hormuz, was carrying crude oil and a window (Contd on page 3)

Tehran rejects Trump's Uranium transfer claim

TEHRAN, Apr 18 (ANI)

IRAN has rejected claims by US President Donald Trump that it has agreed to transfer its enriched uranium to the United States, with its Foreign Ministry strongly dismissing the assertion, Al Jazeera reported.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said Tehran would not allow such a move under any circumstances, according to Al Jazeera. "Enriched uranium is as sacred to us as Iranian soil and will not be transferred anywhere under any circumstances," Baghaei was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency, as per Al Jazeera.

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HORMUZ SOLUTION?
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Cabinet okays continuation of PMGSY-III till March 2028 with revised Rs 83,977 cr outlay

NEW DELHI, Apr 18 (IANS)

THE Cabinet on Saturday approved the continuation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-III (PMGSY-III) beyond March 2025 up to March 2028. The revised outlay of the scheme will be Rs 83,977 crore.

The scheme involves consolidation of through routes and major rural links, connecting habitations to Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), higher secondary schools and hospitals.

The extension of the timeline of PMGSY-III will enable the full realisation of its intended socio-economic benefits by ensuring completion of targeted upgradation of rural roads.

"It will significantly boost the rural economy and trade by enhancing market access for agricultural and non-farm products, reducing transportation time and costs, and thereby improving rural incomes," said an official statement.

Improved connectivity will facilitate better access to education and healthcare institutions, ensuring timely delivery of essential services, particularly in remote and underserved areas, it added. The Cabinet also approved the extension of timeline, till March 2028, for completion of roads and bridges in plain areas and roads in hilly areas; extension of timeline till March 2029 for completion of bridges in hilly areas; and works sanctioned before

Govt approves Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool with sovereign guarantee of Rs 12,980 crore

THE Union Cabinet on Saturday approved the proposal for the creation of a domestic insurance pool, namely 'Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool' (BMI pool) with a sovereign guarantee of Rs 12,980 crore to facilitate continuous maritime insurance coverages, according to an official statement.

The statement said the Domestic Insurance Pool addresses global volatility, geopolitical instability and reduces the external insurance dependency of Indian vessels. "The pool covers all maritime risks like Hull and Machinery, Cargo, P&I and War risk. It covers vessels carrying cargo from any international origin to Indian ports and vice-versa, even when transiting volatile maritime corridors," it added.

The statement said the pool will ensure that Indian trade continues to have access to affordable insurance for vessels carrying cargo from any international origin to Indian ports and vice-versa, even when transiting volatile maritime corridors. Addressing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool will cover India-flagged vessels, India-controlled vessels ... It will cover 10 years period."

31.03.2025 but un-awarded till now may be taken up for tender/award.

The Cabinet okayed Long Span Bridges (LSBs) (total 161 with an estimated cost of Rs 961 crore) pending for sanction but lying on the alignment of already sanctioned roads may be sanctioned and tendered/awarded, along with revision of outlay to Rs 83,977 crore from original outlay of Rs 80,250 crore.

The official statement said that the continued implementation will also generate substantial employment opportunities, both directly through construction activities and indirectly by promoting rural enterprises and services. "Overall, the extension will contribute to inclusive and sustainable development by bridging the rural-urban divide and advancing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047," it added.

Cabinet approves 2 multitracking projects covering UP, Andhra worth Rs 24,815 cr

THE Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Saturday approved two projects of the Railway Ministry with a total cost of Rs 24,815 crore.

The projects include the 403 km Ghaziabad-Sitapur 3rd and 4th lines in Uttar Pradesh and the 198 km Rajahmundry-Visakhapatnam 3rd and 4th lines in Andhra Pradesh. According to a Government statement, the increased line capacity will significantly enhance mobility, resulting in improved operational efficiency and service reliability for the Indian Railways. "These multi-tracking proposals are poised to streamline operations and alleviate congestion. The projects are in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a new India, which will make people of the region 'Aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant) by way of comprehensive development that will enhance their employment/self-employment opportunities," the statement said.

"The projects are part of the PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan with a focus on enhancing multi-modal connectivity and logistical efficiency through integrated planning and stakeholder consultations. They will provide seamless connectivity for the movement of people, goods and services," it added.

US renews sanctions waiver for purchase of Russian oil

WASHINGTON, Apr 18 (PTI)

THE United States has extended by a month a waiver from sanctions to allow countries to buy petroleum products from Russia, days after it ruled out renewal of the special measure.

The US Department of Treasury issued an order late Friday extending the waiver from sanctions on Russian oil that is already at sea on or before April 17 through May 16.

Earlier, the US had granted an exemption from sanctions to India for buying Russian oil for a month beginning March 5. A few days later, a similar waiver was extended to several other countries, which ended on April 11.

The general licence issued by the US on Friday does not authorise any transaction involving a person, entity or joint venture located in Iran, North Korea, Cuba, or parts of Ukraine.

On Wednesday, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Washington would not be renewing the waiver for Russian oil and another for Iranian oil.

“Effective April 17, 2026, General License No. 134A, which was dated March 19, 2026 and expired on April 11, 2026, is replaced and superseded in its entirety by this General License No. 134B,” said the order issued by the Department of Treasury.

G20 satellite expected to be launched in 2027: ISRO chief



Chairman V Narayanan

HYDERABAD, Apr 18 (PTI)

ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said on Saturday that the G20 satellite, designed to study climate, air pollution and monitor weather, is expected to be launched in 2027.

Addressing scientists from DRDO, ISRO, and the Aeronautical Society of India at the Engineering Staff College of India, Dr Narayanan also said India is the first country to succeed in placing 104 satellites, more than 100 satellites using a single rocket without any collision.

“Right now we are also working on a G20 satellite for G-20 countries, India is taking the lead role, and we are going to have the launch by the 2027 time-frame,” he said.

The ISRO chief further said a lot of commercial missions were carried out, including 433 satellites of 34 countries, and the heaviest satellite lifted from India was again a commercial satellite.

Narayanan said ISRO is working towards sending a human to the moon by 2040. “If we make it happen by 2040, we will be on par with any other space-faring nation in terms of launcher technology, satellite technology, application area, and human space flight program. And we are working towards the Viksit Bharat-2024,” he said.