

MoD signs contracts for procurement of critical equipment for T-72/90 tanks

NEW DELHI, Apr 21 (PTI)

THE Defence Ministry on Tuesday signed contracts worth nearly Rs 975 crore for the procurement of critical equipment for T-72 and T-90 tanks of the Army which will enhance the minefield breaching capability of the force.

The contracts were inked in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh in Delhi.

The Ministry, in a statement, said it has signed contracts with Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) and Electro Pneumatics and Hydraulics (India) Private Limited for the "procurement of TRAWL Assembly for T-72/T-90 tanks, at an approximate cost of Rs 975 crore".

The 'TRAWL Assembly' for T-72/T-90 tanks is a critical equipment developed by the DRDO

that will enhance the minefield breaching capability of the Indian Army. "It would generate additional capability of creating vehicle safe lanes through minefields with anti-tank mines with proximity magnetic fuses, thus enhancing the operational effectiveness of the Indian Army," the statement said.

Being a 'Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)' case, the procurement marks a pivotal step towards modernising India's defence infrastructure and empowering indigenous industries, which will be a proud flag-bearer of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, it said. This project has immense potential of direct and indirect employment generation by encouraging the MSME sector through components' manufacturing, the ministry said.

Rajnath on 3-day visit to Berlin

BERLIN, Apr 21 (ANI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday was accorded military honours upon his arrival in Berlin from Munich as part of his three-day official visit to Germany aimed at further strengthening the strategic defence partnership between the two countries.

According to a post on X by the Office of the Defence Minister, Singh was flown in a special German Air Force aircraft during his journey from Munich to Berlin.

The aircraft was escorted by

fighter jets, underscoring the significance of the visit and the high-level reception extended to the Defence Minister.

“Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh reached Berlin today on a three-day visit to Germany. He was flown in a Special German Airforce Aircraft, escorted by Fighter jets during his flight from Munich to Berlin and accorded military honours on his arrival in Berlin,” Office of Defence Minister stated in the post.

Earlier, Rajnath Singh arrived in Munich to commence his official visit to the country.

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Defence Minister Rajnath Singh receives a Guard of Honour on his arrival, in Berlin, Germany. (PTI)

'US-Iran ceasefire likely to be extended'

WASHINGTON, Apr 21 (PTI)

THE ceasefire between the US and Iran is expected to be extended beyond the initial two-week period, as both sides are willing to continue negotiations, former Central Command chief David H Petraeus has said. The ceasefire between the US and Iran is set to expire on Wednesday.

Petraeus, the former general who also served as CIA director, said that there is a "reasonable expectation" that the ceasefire could be prolonged as negotiators from both sides prepare for a possible second round of talks in Islamabad, although uncertainty remains over final participation. "I think both the US and Iran want to extend the ceasefire," he told PTI Videos. Petraeus warned that the situation on the ground remains volatile, with both the US and Iran enforcing rival blockades in the strategically critical Strait of Hormuz, effectively halting maritime traffic.

"There may be use of force, as required for the US to implement the blockade that has been required in response to Iran's blockade. There have been occasional attacks also that appear to have come from Iran, indi-

vidual attacks that have seemed to threaten or force ships to turn around that were trying to go through the Strait," he said.

Outlining two key American "negotiating objectives", Petraeus said, "One is to restore freedom of navigation to the Gulf and to the Strait of Hormuz without any con-



David H Petraeus

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trol by Iran or tariffs or tolls paid to Iran."

"And the second is that Iran renounces its right to enrich uranium and allows the International Atomic Energy Agency or some other body to verify the removal of the stockpile of nearly 1,000 pounds of 60 pc enriched uranium," he added.

Will start bombing Iran if no deal by Wednesday: Trump

WASHINGTON, Apr 21 (PTI)

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said he would start bombing Iran if they do not agree to a deal with the US before the end of the two-week ceasefire on Wednesday.

"Well, I don't want to do that," Trump told CNBC's "Squawk Box" when asked if he would extend the ceasefire with Iran to allow time for the peace talks to reach a deal to end the war.

"They have to negotiate. And, you know, the one thing I'll say is this: Iran can get themselves on a very good footing. If they make a deal, they can make themselves into a strong nation again, a wonderful nation again," he added.

Trump said that if the cease-fire ends on Wednesday without
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Tehran will not negotiate under threat or force: Iranian envoy

WASHINGTON, Apr 21 (IANS)

IRAN'S Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam said on Tuesday that negotiations cannot take place under threat or coercion, underscoring Tehran's stance amid ongoing diplomatic efforts involving US. In a post on X, the envoy said, "a single country in possession of a large civilisation will not negotiate under threat and force," saying the position is a substantial principle. The remarks come at a time when a ceasefire that took effect on April 8 after 40 days of fighting remains fragile.

Pak has mediated talks between Tehran and Washington, in Islamabad on April 11 and 12, but Iran has not confirmed participation in another round, reports Xinhua news agency.

India's economy projected to grow at 6.4 per cent this year, says UN

■ **By Yoshita Singh**

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 21 (PTI)

INDIA'S economy is projected to grow at 6.4 per cent this year and 6.6 per cent in 2027, according to a report by the United Nations.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) said in the report released on Monday

that economies in South and South-West Asia grew by 5.4% in 2025, compared to 5.2% in 2024, driven largely by strong



growth in India.

India's growth edged up to 7.4% in 2025, "supported by robust consumption, especially from the rural economy along with goods and services tax rate cuts, and export frontloading ahead of the United States' tariffs," the report, titled Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2026, said.

Global South needs greater representation at UN: India

NEW YORK, Apr 21 (IANS)

INDIA has highlighted the need for greater representation of the Global South, particularly in the permanent category, in the United Nations Security Council.

Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Sibi George, delivered India's national statement at the IGN meeting on the United Nations Security Council in the UN headquarters.

"He highlighted the need for greater representation of the Global South, particularly in the permanent category. He underlined the similarities between India's approach to UN Security Council reforms and the African model," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a statement on X. India has consistently called for reforms of the United Nations (UN), particularly the UNSC, stressing that reform of global institutions is essential to address global challenges.

During his visit to New York, George held a meeting with the UN Department of Operational Support's Under-Secretary General, Atul Khare, and reaffirmed India's commitment to



Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs Sibi George pays floral tributes at the Mahatma Gandhi bust at the United Nations headquarters, in New York. (PTI)

multilateralism and its remarkable contributions to UN peacekeeping, according to the statement released by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York. George also met the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the

Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, Khaled Khiari.

"Secretary (West) Sibi George met with Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the

Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations. Both had a productive discussion on various topics, with particular focus on UN Peacekeeping", the Indian Permanent Mission posted on X.

Pak extends airspace ban on Indian airlines till May 24

ISLAMABAD, Apr 21 (PTI)

PAKISTAN on Tuesday further extended the ban on Indian aircraft from using its airspace for another month.

Pakistan has kept its airspace shut to Indian flights since April 24, 2025, a move that reportedly caused a loss of billions of rupees to the Indian airlines.

The Pakistan Airports Authority said in the Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) that “all Indian-registered, leased, com-

mmercial and military aircraft will remain barred from Pakistani airspace until 5 am on May 24, 2026”.

The notice was issued days before the previous one was set to expire on April 24. Pakistan closed its airspace for Indian airlines following tension in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, for which New Delhi blamed Islamabad. Pakistan, however, rejected the allegations and also called for a transparent inquiry. India also closed its airspace to Pakistani airlines.

India-linked tariff refunds in US may touch \$12 bn

NEW DELHI, Apr 21 (IANS)

INDIA-LINKED tariff refunds on exports to the United States are expected to be in the region of \$10 to \$12 billion after the US authorities opened a \$166 billion claims window for customs duties imposed by the Donald Trump administration that were later struck down by the courts, according to a report by Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

The refund process opened on April 20, and claims can be filed only by US-based importers, which means Indian exporters have no direct legal route to seek repayments.

Indian companies are now dependent on talks with American buyers if they want to secure any share of the refunds. Exporters may need to seek rebate-sharing deals, price changes, or improved terms in future contracts.



The report said the headline figure points to a large opportunity, but warned that any actual gain for Indian exporters will depend on their negotiating strength and their ability to reopen commercial terms with US partners.

Textiles and apparel, engi-

neering goods, and chemicals are likely to account for most of the India-linked refunds, as these sectors were among the worst hit when the tariffs were abruptly jacked up.

The refund platform is being managed by US Customs and Border Protection through its

Consolidated Administration and Processing of Entries system, known as CAPE.

The first phase covers businesses with unliquidated entries, or import filings still under customs review, and entries that were finalised within the past 80 days. Businesses with older finalised entries must wait for later phases before filing claims.

US customs officials told a federal judge that businesses already eligible under the first phase are owed about \$127 billion in refunds. There appears to be a long process ahead as importers must submit claims through the CAPE portal with records linked to eligible entries, including customs filings, tariff payment history, and entry classifications.

The agency said it is handling about 53 million entries filed by 330,000 importers. Even after approval, refunds may take 60 to 90 days to be paid.