

Rajnath: India may play greater role in settling conflicts

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Defence minister Rajnath Singh said in Berlin on Wednesday that India has consistently maintained a balanced diplomatic approach under PM Narendra Modi, while leaving open the possibility of a greater Indian role in resolving global conflict, including the West Asia crisis.



Paying homage to the victims on the first anniversary of the Pahalgam attack at an Indian community event at the embassy, Rajnath also delivered a sharp rebuke to Pakistan, saying, "(Our) neighbours are more or less fine; there's just one problem, which you all know about. But if any neighbour now tries to mess around, then dot-dot-dot."

Rajnath held bilateral talks with federal minister of defence Boris Pistorius to further boost the strategic defence partnership with the European nation. The two sides discussed a range of bilateral security and defence issues, including priority areas for co-development and co-production of defence equipment, especially in niche technologies.

Rajnath highlighted the country's efforts to resolve conflicts. "India has tried... But everything has its time.

News of payment by Indian ship to Iran fake: Govt

New Delhi: The shipping ministry on Wednesday dismissed online reports alleging that the captain of Indian-flagged ship, Sanmar Herald, paid cash or cryptocurrency to Iran to secure safe passage through Strait of Hormuz, calling it "fake news". In an official statement, Sanmar Shipping Ltd called the reports "completely false".

Sanmar Herald was one of two Indian vessels that had to turn back from the Strait of Hormuz after Iranian forces fired upon them on April 18.

"We spoke with the owner of the vessel and he confirmed that it is fake news... None of our ships made any payment, till date," said Mukesh Mangal, additional secretary in the shipping ministry. TNN

It is possible that tomorrow, the time may come when India plays its role and achieves success as well."

He said Modi had engaged with leaders of countries involved in conflict to encourage dialogue. "When he met Russian President Putin and Ukrainian President Zelensky, he discussed this. When he met Trump, he... said a solution should be found," Rajnath said.

Heatwaves pose risk to India's crops: UN report

'Ganga-Indus Region Most Vulnerable'

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New Delhi: Heatwaves will pose a major threat to Indian agricultural workers and rice production, and the most intense risk from future extreme heat events will be concentrated around densely populated farming regions of Ganges and Indus river basins, a new report from UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has said.

Released on World Earth Day on Wednesday, the report analysed the impact of extreme heat on the output of rice and other farm products in India.

It cited examples from extreme heat events of 2022 in



The report coincides with the forecast of 'below normal' rainfall during the four-month monsoon season this year

India, underlining how abnormal rise in maximum and minimum temperatures during the year had affected crops, fruits, vegetables, livestock and poultry in over one-third of states/UTs, including Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra.

"That year will also be remembered as a classic exam-

ple of the combined impacts of high temperatures and reduced rainfall felt throughout India's agricultural production systems, specifically in northern and central India," said the report which comes at a time when there is a forecast of 'below normal' rainfall in the country during the four-month (June-Sept) monsoon season this year.

WMO defines heatwaves as prolonged periods of abnormally hot weather, lasting from several days to months, when both daytime and nighttime temperatures exceed typical regional averages.

The report noted that frequency, intensity and duration of extreme heat events globally have risen sharply over the past half century and risks to agrifood systems and ecosystems are set to soar in the future. "Extreme heat is increasingly defining the conditions under which agrifood systems operate," said WMO secretary-general Celeste Saulo.

Nepal home min resigns over wealth scrutiny, 2nd cabinet exit in a month

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Nepal home minister Sudhan Gurung, a hand-picked aide of PM Bhandra Shah, resigned on Wednesday amid scrutiny of his wealth disclosures, investments and alleged business links with businessman and power broker Deepak Bhatta, who is being investigated in a money-laundering case. In a day of dramatic developments, Shah took charge of the home ministry after Gurung's exit, just 26 days after his govt took office.

Gurung's resignation is the second ministerial setback for Shah within weeks. On April 9, Shah sacked labour, employment and social security minister Deepak Kumar Sah after a panel found that he had misused his position to keep his wife, Junu Shrestha, on the health insurance board, a move the party said had breached its code of conduct and discipline.

A former event manager and nightclub DJ who founded NGO Hami Nepal after helping with relief work during the 2015 earthquake, Gurung had emerged as one of the leaders of last year's deadly Gen Z protests. Notably,



Nepal minister Sudhan Gurung (L) bids farewell at his office in Kathmandu on Wednesday

Shah and Gurung joined the ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) together on Jan 18.

Announcing his resignation, Gurung said he was stepping down to allow a probe and avoid any conflict of interest. The controversy began after ministers' asset declarations were made public on April 12. Gurung declared shares and securities, 1.04kg of gold, 6kg of silver, more than Nepali Rupees 61 lakh (INR 38 lakh) in cash, a vehicle and land in Dhankuta. The disclosures triggered questions over the wealth of a politician who had built his image around activism and clean governance.

Gurung denied concealing the investments, saying they were part of his declared portfolio. "Someone who intends to hide assets does not openly declare over Rs 20 million in investments," he said earlier.

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Pipeline restarts Russian oil flows to Europe, unblocking EU loan for Kyiv

Budapest/Brussels: Russian oil flowed through the Ukrainian section of the Druzhba pipeline on Wednesday after a halt lasting months, officials said, allowing Hungary to lift its veto on a €90 billion EU loan urgently needed by Kyiv. The Druzhba pipeline has become one of the most politically charged pieces of infrastructure in Europe since a Russian drone strike damaged the pipeline in western Ukraine and stopped Russian oil deliveries to Hungary and Slovakia.

Hungarian oil group MOL said on Wednesday that Ukraine had informed it that deliveries of Russian crude had resumed through the pipeline. "MOL expects the first crude oil shipments following the restart of the Ukrainian section of the pipeline system to arrive in Hungary and Slovakia by tomorrow," it said. REUTERS

Iran oil tankers go dark to sail past US blockade

At least two fully laden Iranian tankers have sailed out of the Persian Gulf and past a US blockade this week, part of a flotilla that has made its way around the warships and ferried roughly 9 million barrels of oil to the market. The Hero II and Hedy, two Iran-flagged, very-large crude carriers, are the latest to be captured in satellite imagery, moving past the line identified by the US and into the Arabian Sea on April 20, according to data intelligence firm Vortexa. The pair can together carry as much as 4 million barrels of oil.

The exit of laden tankers demonstrates the limits of US efforts to cordon off Tehran's crude exports — which President Trump has described as a “tremendous success” — and pressure an otherwise resilient Iranian regime into concessions. Since the blockade began last week, the US Navy has seized an Iran-linked cargo vessel and boarded a sanctioned oil tanker in waters east of Sri Lanka, widening its targeted area. BLOOMBERG

Trump hints at talks in 72 hrs even as Iran seizes 2 ships

One Ship Bound For Mundra, Firm Says Crew Safe

TNN & Agencies

President Donald Trump changed his aggressive stance on Iran and extended the ceasefire indefinitely, even as Iran's Revolutionary Guard Wednesday fired on three ships in the Strait of Hormuz, seized two of them and was bringing them to Iran, according to Iranian media.

One of these, the container ship Epaminondas, indicated Mundra port in Gujarat as its destination while another container ship Francesca was signalling that it was heading to Hambantota port in Sri Lanka. The third vessel, container ship Euphoria, was indicating Jeddah in Saudi Arabia as its destination.

Trump extended the ceasefire at the request of Pakistan to give Tehran's leadership more time to prepare a unified proposal to end the war, but said an economic blockade of Iran's ports will remain in place. Iran's parliament speaker and top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that a complete ceasefire only made sense if it

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was not violated by the US blockade. Qalibaf said the reopening of the strait was impossible with such a "flagrant breach of the ceasefire".

Epaminondas and Francesca are operated by the world's largest container shipping line Mediterranean Shipping Co. Technomar Shipping, which owns Epa-

US PREZ EXTENDS CEASEFIRE INDEFINITELY

> TACO taunts: Trump's decision has deepened a perception in Washington that admin's Iran policy is less a doctrine and more of a mood swing, and it is being improvised in real time

> With global markets jittery, oil routes under strain, and Tehran signalling reluctance even to show up for talks, Washington faces an unenviable choice between escalation into a potentially costly conflict and backing



down from its own threats

> Oil prices reverse course to head higher, Brent crude futures up almost 4% at \$102.2 a barrel. After a 3-session

winning run, **sensex** closes 757 points lower at 78,516 points. **Rupee** declines 34p to close at 93.78 against the US dollar

> Govt-authorised fertiliser IPL set to import 25L tonnes of urea in \$935-\$959/tonne range — almost double the rate 2 months ago

> Trump says Iran had halted alleged plans to execute 8 women arrested over anti-govt protests, after he urged Tehran to release them. Iran denied it planned to execute the women



'Fake news': Govt denies Indian ship captain paid for passage

Govt on Wednesday dismissed as "fake news" online reports alleging that the captain of Indian-flagged ship, Sanmar Herald, paid either in cash or cryptocurrency to Iran to secure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz. Sanmar Shipping Ltd also said these reports are "completely false". Sanmar Herald had to turn back after Iranian forces fired at it on April 18. "We spoke with the owner of the vessel and he confirmed... no such incident had happened," said Mukesh Mangal, additional secretary in the shipping ministry. P7

minondas, said all crew were "safe and accounted for" and no injuries were reported, but that preliminary inspections indicated the ship's bridge had been damaged.

Trump's dramatic announcement came just hours before the two-week ceasefire was set to expire. Pakistan had urged an extension of the

truce due to uncertainty surrounding the second round of talks. There was still no clarity on the date of the next round of talks.

On Wednesday, the New York Post quoted Trump as saying that the second round of the US-Iran talks could take place as early as Friday.

Such development was

Centre plans special ships to lower costs for exporters

Govt is working with agencies, including Shipping Corporation of India, which was on the privatisation list until recently, to run special vessels to West Asia to help exporters move their goods at cheaper rates, reports Sidhartha. DGFT has held consultations on the issue and APEDA, which is tasked with farm exports, will lead cargo aggregation efforts, including identifying and roping in exporters. The move indicates that agricultural products — from perishables to rice and tea — will be given a major push. P15

"possible" within the next 36 to 72 hours, the paper reported, quoting Trump.

However, Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said Tehran has not yet decided whether to attend a new round of Pakistani-mediated talks in Islamabad.

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