

2 key DRDO-developed armoured platforms unveiled

To meet emerging operational requirements of Armed Forces

NEW DELHI, Apr 25 (PTI)

TWO key armoured platforms designed and developed by the DRDO, to meet the emerging operational requirements of the Armed Forces, were unveiled on Saturday. The Advanced Armoured Platforms (Tracked and Wheeled), designed and developed by Vehicles Research & Development Establishment, were unveiled by Secretary, Department of Defence (R&D) and Chairman, DRDO, Samir V Kamat at the premises of the DRDO's laboratory in Ahilyanagar, Maharashtra, the



Defence Ministry said.

"The platforms have been

developed to meet the emerging operational requirements of the

defence forces," it said in a statement. Both the platforms have been integrated with indigenously designed and developed 30 mm crewless turret, with advanced features to meet the mobility, fire power and protection requirements, it said.

The 30 mm crewless turret along with the 7.62 mm PKT gun is configured to launch Anti-Tank Guided Missiles as well. The base design has the capabilities to be configured for multiple roles. The indigenous content is to the tune of 65 per cent with plans to increase it to 90 per cent, the

Ministry said.

"Integrated with high power engine and automatic transmission, these platforms possess a high power to weight ratio, higher speed capabilities, gradient and obstacle negotiating capability, STANAG (a measure of the level of protection) level 4 and 5 protection with modular blast and ballistic protection all around," the statement said.

Amphibian with improved water obstacle crossing capability by incorporating hydro jets provides operational flexibility in the platforms, it said.

Severe heatwave grips Delhi and North India

NEW DELHI, Apr 25 (IANS)

A SEVERE heatwave continues to grip Delhi and large parts of North India, with residents struggling under intense temperatures and dry, scorching winds. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has indicated that there is little respite in sight, with Saturday expected to bring another day of oppressive heat and discomfort.

Meanwhile, a severe heat alert has been issued in Uttar Pradesh's 32 districts.

Over the past 24 hours, the city has witnessed minimal fluctuation in temperatures. Minimum temperatures ranged between 23 degrees Celsius and 26 degrees Celsius, while maximum temperatures climbed to 42–43 degrees Celsius. In several parts of Delhi, the mercury remained 1.6 to 3.0 degrees Celsius above the seasonal average, intensifying the impact of the ongoing heatwave.

Meanwhile, a severe heat alert has been issued in Uttar Pradesh, where a prolonged spell of extreme heat is underway. According to the MeT, these conditions are expected to persist through April 25, affecting both daytime and nighttime temperatures.

A heatwave warning has been issued for 32 districts, including Prayagraj, Sonbhadra, Pratapgarh, Mirzapur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Lakhimpur Kheri, Sitapur, Barabanki, Amethi, Sultanpur, Pilibhit, Bhadohi, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Mau, Ballia, Deoria, Gorakhpur, Basti, Kushinagar, Maharajganj, Gonda, Balrampur, Shravasti, Bahraich, and Shahjahanpur. Authorities have advised residents to take precautions against heat-related illnesses.

IMD ISSUES DUAL ALERT OF HEATWAVE, RAINS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF RAJASTHAN: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a mixed weather alert for Rajasthan, warning of continued heatwave conditions alongside the possibility of storms and light rainfall in several districts over the coming days. Rajasthan is expected to endure two more days of intense heatwave conditions (April 25–26) before a change in weather patterns brings partial relief.

CDS shares resolve to expand engagements with US

NEW DELHI, Apr 25 (ANI)

CHIEF of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan on Saturday held talks with General Kevin B Schneider, Commander, Pacific Air Force and Air Component Commander, US Indo-Pacific Command, sharing resolve towards regional security.

Both sides articulated a clear intent to expand and operationalise the scope of bilateral engagements.

As per a statement by the Integrated Defence Staff on X, "General Anil Chauhan CDS engaged with General Kevin B Schneider, Commander, Pacific Air Force and Air Component Commander, US Indo-Pacific Command reaffirming the deepening strategic convergence between India and the United States. Deliberations underscored a shared resolve towards



Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan (L) in a meeting with Commander of US Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) General Kevin B Schneider (C) and others in New Delhi. (@HQ_IDS_India/X via PTI)

regional security and the enduring maintenance of peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific and beyond."

"Both sides articulated a clear intent to expand and operationalise the scope, complexity and frequency of bilateral and

TriService engagements. Recognising technology as a defining determinant of modern power, the partnership continues to evolve with enhanced synergy, capability and strategic foresight," the statement added.

Earlier on Friday, Schneider, met Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh in the national capital to advance bilateral defence initiatives and deepen military-to-military cooperation between India and the United States.

According to the Ministry of Defence, the discussions focused on enhancing collaboration through joint exercises.

"Commander, Pacific Air Forces & Air Component Commander, US Indo-Pacific Command General Kevin B Schneider today called on Defence Secretary Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh in New Delhi. Discussions focused on advancing defence initiatives and enhancing military-to-military cooperation through joint exercises, training visits & strategic exchanges," the Ministry of Defence said in a statement shared on X.

Govt reconstitutes Niti Aayog

NEW DELHI, Apr 25 (PTI)

THE Government has reconstituted the NITI Aayog, appointing Ashok Kumar Lahiri as Vice Chairman and five full-time members, including economist KV Raju, Director of AIIMS M Srinivas and Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology.

Making the announcement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished a productive and impactful tenure to Lahiri and the new full-time members, including scientist Gobardhan Das and former Cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba.

"The Government has



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, left, exchanges a handshake with newly-appointed Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog Ashok Lahiri. (PTI)

reconstituted the NITI Aayog. My best wishes to Shri Ashok Kumar Lahiri Ji on becoming the Vice Chairman. My best wishes also to Shri Rajiv Gauba Ji, Prof K V Raju Ji, Prof Gobardhan Das Ji, Prof Abhay Karandikar Ji and Dr M Srinivas Ji on becoming Full Time Members of NITI Aayog.

"Wishing all of them a productive and impactful tenure ahead," Modi said in a post on 'X'. "It serves as a dynamic platform for innovation and long-term strategic thinking across sectors," he said.

The Prime Minister is the Chairman of the NITI Aayog.

Lahiri called on the PM following his appointment.

Iran, US appear ready to communicate

Direct talks remain on hold

NEW YORK, Apr 25 (IANS)

IRAN and the US appeared to be ready for communicating again, if at arm's length and with secondary-level interlocutors, as a team from Tehran arrived in Pakistan and a US group was set to head there on Saturday.

After the second round of talks that was to have taken place this week or over last weekend didn't take off because Iran refused to join, there has been some delicate manoeuvres by Tehran to reopen contacts.

As the stalemate continues, Tehran has closed the Strait of Hormuz, and the US has blockaded Iran's ports.

And behind the facade of a ceasefire, the US has attacked

and seized Iranian ships, and Tehran has attacked and seized ships, including one heading to India from Dubai.

While Iran has refused to negotiate with the US while the blockade was in effect, its Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Islamabad on Friday, ostensibly as part of a round of consultations with Pakistan, Oman and Russia, according to Tehran.

Presumably, Araghchi will be there when US negotiators -- US President Donald Trump's son-

-in-law Jared Kushner and Special Representative Steve Witkoff arrive there.

But Iran Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei ruled out a direct meeting between them.

Taking to his social media platform X Baghaei said, "No meeting is planned to take place between Iran and the US. Iran's observations would be conveyed to Pakistan."

Instead of a direct contact, the two sides may communicate through Pakistani intermedi-

aries. It could be like the failed indirect negotiations between the two sides in Geneva where Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi acted as the go-between on February 26 -- two days before Israel began bombing Iran with the US joining in.

Kushner and Witkoff were in Geneva as was Araghchi.

US Vice-President JD Vance and Iran Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who led their sides during the

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Not sending Witkoff, Kushner to Pak for Iran talks: Trump

ISLAMABAD, Apr 25 (AP)

PRESIDENT Donald Trump says he told top US envoys not to travel to Pakistan to negotiate with Iran, telling Fox News that "they can call us anytime they want."

In a brief phone interview on Saturday, Trump told Fox News that he told US negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner "you're not going to be making any more 18 hour flights to sit around talking



about nothing." Trump also said of the US side "we have all the cards." His comments came after the White House said on Friday that Witkoff and Kushner would be heading to Pakistan for another round of negotiations with Iran.

Iranian delegation exits Pak without meeting US envoys

ISLAMABAD, Apr 25 (ANI)

THE Iranian delegation, led by Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, departed Islamabad on Saturday evening after a day of high-level meetings with the Pakistan leadership, leaving Pakistan's ambitious claims of brokering a US-Iran peace deal as part of the second round of negotiations in tatters.

As reported by 'Al Jazeera', the delegation left the Pakistani capital after delivering an "official list of demands" to Pakistani leaders for the US and Israel in order to achieve a com-

plete solution to the conflict in West Asia.

The departure effectively signals the end of Islamabad's hopes to facilitate the much-anticipated second round of direct dialogue, as Araghchi is now set to travel to Oman and Russia, bypassing any further engagement in the Pakistani capital.

In a frantic effort to project diplomatic weight, Pakistan's top civilian and military leadership converged at the house of the Pakistani Prime Minister for a meeting with the Iranian delegation that lasted approx-

imately two hours prior to Araghchi's departure.

Alongside Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the meeting saw the heavy-handed presence of Pakistan's Army Chief Asim Munir, Deputy PM Ishaq Dar, and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

Despite the presence of Pakistan's entire security and political top brass, the engagement appeared to be little more than a 'messenger' service.

According to Kamran Khan, chairman of Pakistan-based news outlet ARY News, citing sources, the Iranian side, rather

than engaging in the mediated peace talks Pakistan had promised, simply handed over a list of preconditions -- specifically the lifting of the US naval blockade on Iranian ports on the Strait of Hormuz.

Khan, prior to the high-level diplomatic engagement between Tehran and Islamabad, reported that the talks with the US and Iran in Islamabad were "rapidly fading", exposing the host nation's diplomatic impotence as Tehran refused to meet the travelling American delegation.

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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, right, is welcomed by Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar upon his arrival at Nur Khan airbase in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on Friday. (AP/PTI)