

IAF chief receives Guard of Honour in Lanka, pays tribute to IPKF martyrs

COLOMBO, May 20 (IANS)

CHIEF of the Air Staff of the Indian Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, received a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) Headquarters during his official visit to the island nation, marking a key diplomatic and Defence engagement between the two countries.

Taking to social media platform X on Wednesday, the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka posted: "The Chief of the Air Staff was ceremonially received with a Guard of Honour at SLAF headquarters prior to formal meetings on 19 May 2026 and prior to his Call On with Commander of SLAF. He also called on the Deputy Minister of Defence Maj Gen Aruna Jayasekara (Retd) and the Secretary Defence AVM Sampath Thuyacontha (Retd)."

"ACM A.P. Singh paid his respects to the IPKF martyrs by laying a wreath at the monument in Battaramulla," it added. The visit comes amid efforts to further strengthen India-Sri Lanka military cooperation and enhance coordination in the Indian Ocean Region. The Chief of the Air Staff is in Sri Lanka for a three-day official visit aimed at strengthening bilateral Defence cooperation and enhancing military-to-military engagement



Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh with Sri Lanka Air Force Commander Air Marshal Vasu Bandu Edirisinghe during a meeting in Sri Lanka. (PTI)

between the two neighbours. He will remain in the island nation until May 21.

The High Commission informed: "The Chief of Air Staff of the Indian Air Force was warmly welcomed at the Sri Lanka Air Force Headquarters. Subsequently, a meeting was held between him and the Commander of the Sri Lanka Air Force."

Suryastra rockets hit targets at 300 kms during trials



BALASORE, May 20 (ANI)

IN A major boost to India's indigenous defence manufacturing capabilities, Pune-based defence firm Nibe Limited has announced the successful test-firing of its Suryastra Universal Rocket Launcher system.

The consecutive trials, conducted at the Interim Test Range (ITR) in Chandipur, Odisha, on May 18 and 19, 2026, met all mission objectives with exceptional precision, Nibe Group said in a press release.

The successful trials come on the heels of a critical purchase order awarded to Nibe Limited in January 2026 under the Indian Army's Emergency Procurement window. The contract fast-tracked the development and supply of the Suryastra Universal Rocket Launcher, along with dedicated 150 km and 300 km range rockets.

The system demonstrated devastating accuracy during the two-day testing window.

Demand for Israel's battle-tested weapons soars amid war cries

TEL AVIV, May 20 (AP)

WHEN Israeli defence officials approached Massivit last year about using its unique 3D printers to make military drone parts, CEO Yossi Azarzar jumped at the chance.

Although the Israeli company had been producing large set pieces and other designs for the likes of Disney, DreamWorks and Netflix, the opportunity to instead quickly churn out large drone parts for the military was too good to ignore.

"I stopped thinking about Hollywood sets," Azarzar said.



Israel's 3D-printed UAV

"The entertainment industry is a nice customer - defence is a necessity."

Business has been booming for the Israeli arms sector, despite widespread criticism of the country's conduct in its wars in Gaza, with Hezbollah and with Iran.

Countries that have vowed to shun Israeli weapons makers are nonetheless quietly placing orders, according to industry officials. And manufacturers can show that their innovations are being combat-tested.

According to Israel's Defence Ministry, Israeli weapons sales have more than doubled over the past five years, with a record high of nearly USD 15 billion in 2024. While the ministry hasn't released overall 2025 figures, leading Israeli weapons makers, including Elbit and Israel Aerospace Industries, both reported double-digit sales growth last year.

Xi, Putin oppose US-Israel war on Iran

Warn Strait of Hormuz disruption poses threat to global trade

BEIJING, May 20 (PTI)

CHINESE President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin expressed their opposition to the US-Israeli war on Iran on Wednesday, while warning that restrictions on shipping imposed by "individual states" threatened global trade, in a veiled reference to Tehran, which has blocked shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

The US and Israeli strikes against Iran are illegal and seriously undermine stability in the Middle East, said a joint statement issued at the end of their day-long talks here.

It also criticised US President Donald Trump's Golden Dome shield defence plan.

The implementation of the Golden Dome project a multilayer missile defence system initiated by Trump - would have "serious negative consequences for international security", according to the joint statement released by the Kremlin.

Putin's visit to Beijing followed days after Trump's tour here during which the Iran war, opening of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran dominated their talks.

Both China and Russia are strong strategic allies of Iran, sharing military and commercial ties while disregarding US sanctions on Tehran for its nuclear programme. Salient points of the joint statement issued by Tass said Russia and China consider the actions of "individual states" to restrict shipping a threat to global trade, an apparent reference to the Strait of Hormuz crisis.

In retaliation for Iran's action to block commercial ships from crossing the Strait, the US blockaded Iran's ports, which affected Iranian supplies to China, a major importer of Iranian oil.

Earlier, Putin and Xi called for an immediate end to hostilities in West Asia, saying the situation had reached a "critical juncture".



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping inspect guard of honour during a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. (AP/PTI)

Welcoming Putin at the Great Hall of the People, Xi said renewed fighting in the Gulf and the wider West Asia must be avoided and stressed that negotiations should continue. An early end to the conflict will help ease disruptions to energy supplies, industrial and supply chains, and the international trade order, Xi said.

The meeting is being closely watched as both China and Russia are key strategic partners of Iran with close economic and military ties to Tehran and could influence its tough stand on the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which has triggered a major global energy crisis.

On the Russia-Ukraine war, the joint statement said Russia and China believe it is necessary to address the root causes of the Ukrainian crisis.

Russia values China's objective and unbiased position on Ukraine.

India-Italy now Special Strategic Partners

Bilateral trade between India and Italy is progressing towards the target of 20 billion Euros with more than 800 Italian companies actively contributing to India's growth story, said Modi

ROME, May 20 (IANS)

ANNOUNCING the elevation of India-Italy ties to a 'Special Strategic Partnership, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029 provides a practical and forward-looking framework for



enhancing bilateral ties. Addressing a joint press meet with his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni following their talks in Rome on Wednesday, PM Modi stated that the bilateral trade between India and Italy is progressing towards the target of 20 billion Euros with more than 800 Italian companies actively contributing to India's growth story. "I am happy to announce that we are upgrading our relations to a Special Strategic Partnership. In today's meeting, we discussed in detail ways to

Read Time & Tide
'INDO-MEDITERRANEAN'
on page 8

further strengthen our partnership. The India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029 provides our partnership with a
(Contd on page 5)

PM Modi, Italian President discuss trade, technology, clean energy and culture



Prime Minister Narendra Modi exchanges a handshake with Italian President Sergio Mattarella in Rome, Italy. (PMO via PTI)

ROME, May 20 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday called on Italian President Sergio Mattarella and held discussions on further expanding the India-Italy partnership in areas such as trade, technology, clean energy and culture.

PM Modi arrived in Italy on Tuesday on the concluding leg of his five-nation tour from May 15-20. He was earlier in the UAE, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway.

In a social media post, the Prime Minister said, he discussed different aspects relating to the

India-Italy friendship, including trade, investment and cultural linkages with President Mattarella.

"We talked about how our nations can collaborate in areas such as AI, critical minerals, space and nuclear energy," Modi said.

According to Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, the two leaders also exchanged views on regional and international developments of mutual interest.

"The two leaders reaffirmed the strong and enduring India-Italy partnership," Jaiswal said in a social media post.

(Contd on page 5)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi exchanges a handshake with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Italy on Wednesday. (L) PM Gifts a packet of 'Melody' toffees to the Meloni. (PTI/ANI)

'Melodi' moment: Modi gifts toffee to Meloni

ROME, May 20 (IANS)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi presented a light-hearted and unique gift -- a "Melody" toffee packet -- to his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni, bringing back the widely popular "#Melodi" moment that has often gone viral on social media.

The informal exchange, marked by laughter between the two leaders, was later shared by the Italian PM on Instagram, where she also spoke about the gesture and the gift received from the Indian Prime Minister.

Sharing the video of the

moment, Meloni said, "Prime Minister Modi brought us a gift -- a very, very good toffee -- Melody," as both leaders were seen sharing a laugh during the interaction. She further added in her caption, "Thank you for the gift."

The "Melodi" phenomenon -- a portmanteau combining the names of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Giorgia Meloni -- has become a recurring viral trend online, reflecting the visible personal rapport and friendly exchanges between the two leaders during various international engagements. The term has frequently been used by social media users to highlight their light-hearted interactions at global platforms.

**'Melody' frenzy!
Parle Industries'
shares turn sweet**

NFW DELHI, May 20 (PTI)