

India, Oman trade pact to come into force from today

NEW DELHI, May 31 (PTI)



INDIA and Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) will come into force from June 1.

The two countries will formally announce the decision

on Monday.

This will be the fifth free trade agreement (FTA) implemented under the Modi Government. Since 2014, India has implemented four trade pacts with - Mauritius (April 2021 implemented), Australia (December 2022 implemented), UAE (May 2022 implemented), and EFTA (implemented in October 2025 - Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway).

India has signed similar deals with the UK (July 2025) and New Zealand (April 2026). It has announced the conclusion of talks with the European Union (27-nation bloc) on January 27 this year.

India gets 100% duty-free market access for its exports to Oman, covering 98.08% of Oman's tariff lines (or product categories) covering 99.38% of the trade value (average of 2022-23). Exports from India to Oman that currently face a 5% duty on goods worth USD 3.64 billion. The pact will give a boost to India's price competitiveness.

Armed Forces committed to PM Modi's 'JAI' vision: New CDS

JAI -- Jointness, Atmanirbharta, and Innovation



General N S Raja Subramani accorded a Tri-Services Guard of Honour during a ceremony marking his assumption of charge as the new Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) in New Delhi on Sunday. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, May 31 (IANS)

CHIEF of Defence Staff (CDS) General N S Raja Subramani on Sunday reaffirmed his commitment to protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India, as well as

effectively implementing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of JAI -- Jointness, Atmanirbharta, and Innovation.

General Subramani took charge as the new CDS on Sunday, succeeding General Anil Chauhan, who retired from the service on May 30. Ahead of assuming charge as CDS, General Subramani laid a wreath at the National War Memorial, paying tributes to those who sacrificed their lives on the line of duty. He was then accorded a Guard of Honour at the South Block Lawns.

General Subramani, widely known as an expert on Pakistan and China, on Sunday took charge as India's new Chief of Defence Staff with a primary mandate to implement the ambitious military theaterisation plan and bolster tri-services synergy.

Speaking to the reporters, CDS General Subramani said, "I am honoured to assume charge as the Chief of Defence Staff. We are grateful to the nation for the trust reposed in the Armed Forces. We, the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force, Ministry of Defence, strategic institutions, and all stakeholders, stand united as part of a whole-of-nation approach to strengthen India's security."

The CDS said that the Armed Forces are committed to implementing the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi -- JAI: Jointness, Atmanirbharta, and Innovation.

"Transformation of the Armed Forces and organisational reforms to enhance jointness, synergy and integration

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Nepal PM's comments about 'encroaching' Indian land triggers controversy

KATHMANDU, May 31 (PTI)

NEPAL Prime Minister Balendra Shah on Sunday said he has learnt about his country "encroaching" territories in India, as he sought to answer questions in the Parliament on a long-running border dispute.

In his maiden appearance in the ongoing Parliament session that started on May 11, Shah further said India and Nepal have agreed to take the help of historians, surveyors and experts to seek a resolution, adding that Kathmandu has also taken up the matter with China and the United Kingdom.

Nepal and India have had an old boundary dispute over Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani, with both countries

claiming the areas. India maintains that the territories are part of Uttarakhand and has said the issue should be addressed through bilateral dialogue.

New Delhi did not immediately respond to the Nepal PM's comments on Sunday. But earlier this month, while rejecting Nepal's objection to the upcoming Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the long-established Lipulekh Pass, India had dismissed Kathmandu's territorial claims over the region as an "unilateral artificial enlargement" that New Delhi finds "untenable."

Shah told the Parliament on Sunday: "The Nepal Government has officially sent a diplomatic note to India, mentioning the issue of encroachment of territories by India, including

Lipulekh, and we have already received their response."

When specifically asked by a lawmaker about the Government's view on the dispute concerning the Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani areas, Shah said it is not only India that has "encroached" land in Nepal, the latter too had done the same with its southern neighbour.

"You will be surprised to know about a fact, which I have learnt recently, only after becoming the Prime Minister. India has not only encroached Nepalese territories, but Nepal has also encroached India's territories in many places," said the Prime Minister, who came to power after a sweeping election victory earlier this year.

ISRO-Jal Shakti likely to sign MoU to strengthen water resource assessment

NEW DELHI, May 31 (PTI)

THE Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) are expected to sign a memorandum of understanding to strengthen satellite-based applications and advanced technologies for water resource assessment, monitoring and management, with 24 priority studies and areas of cooperation already identified.

The MoU is expected to be signed during the national workshop on R&D in Water to be held on June 1 at the Dr Ambedkar International Centre here, the Ministry said.

A major highlight of the event

will be the launch of MAHA on Water (Mission for Advancement in High-Impact Areas for Water), a joint initiative of the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) to promote cutting-edge research in priority areas such as water resources management, drinking water, climate resilience and water-use efficiency.

An open call for research proposals under the initiative will also be announced. The Ministry will further launch an open call for startups and MSMEs under the BHARAT-WIN portal to support product and prototype development in the water sector.

5 Ebola recoveries in Congo, new treatment centre opens

Bunia: Five patients have recovered from a rare type of Ebola virus, the head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Tedros Adhanom said Sunday during a visit to Bunia in eastern Congo, a city at the heart of an outbreak. "We're still working on vaccines and treatments but that doesn't mean people cannot recover from Ebola," he said during the opening of a new Ebola treatment centre in Bunia.

WHO said authorities have reported 134 confirmed cases in Congo and neighbouring Uganda, including 18 confirmed deaths as of May 29.

Baraka Bulambulu, one of those who recovered, said on Sunday that community members feared contracting an unknown illness from them, keeping their distance while delivering food. He said the uncertainty was overwhelming, as he and other patients believed they might die without knowing what disea-

Brazil investigates 2 possible Ebola cases

Brazilian health authorities are monitoring two patients for possible Ebola infection, officials said. A 37-year-old man from the Democratic Republic of the Congo "exhibited symptoms such as fever, meeting the definition of a suspected case" of Ebola, the Sao Paulo state govt said on Saturday. While initial tests did not detect the Ebola virus in the patient, he is being monitored, the statement said. The health department in Rio de Janeiro state meanwhile reported that it had activated safety protocols after a man from Uganda showed "viral symptoms such as cough, chills, and diarrhoea." AFP

se they had. "Being able to come out of this alive is an immense source of happiness," he said. REUTERS

Trump sends tougher terms to Iran for peace deal: Report

Tehran Says No Deal Till Iranians Rights Secured

Tehran: Iran will not accept any agreement ending its conflict with the US unless there is certainty that the Iranian people's rights are secured, top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said on Sunday, according to state media.

Ghalibaf's remarks came as reports emerged that US President Donald Trump had sent a tougher peace proposal back to Iran, and underlined the rift that the parties still need to close. "There is no trust in the enemy's words and promises. Our only criterion is to achieve tangible results before we fulfil our commitments in return," Qalibaf added after taking an oath as the re-elected speaker of parliament.

Any further tweaks to the peace draft could further delay an agreement to formally end the war in West Asia and reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

The New York Times and Axios reported on Saturday that Trump had sent back a "tougher" new framework to be considered by Iran, though details remain unclear. Trump has said his priorities include stopping Iran from any nuclear weapon development and re-opening the Hormuz shipping lane, over which Iran has sought to impose control since the war began. "The one guarantee that I have to have is that there will be no nuclear weapons. They-



Demonstrators wave Iranian flags during a pro-govt rally in Tehran on Saturday

Now, Hegseth says US is developing a 'true friendship' with Pakistan

US defence secretary Pete Hegseth said "true friendship" is growing between Washington and Pakistan as Islamabad helps to negotiate an end to the war in Iran. Speaking at an Asian defence summit in Singapore, Hegseth singled out Pakistan's army chief and prime minister for praise for their role in the peace negotiations.

"An unexpected development and a true friendship" has been developing, Hegseth said. "That was reflected in President Donald Trump's ability to broker peace between India and Pakistan during their conflict last year," he added. New Delhi has consistently rejected Trump's claims that he brokered the ceasefire. BLOOMBERG

"I've agreed to that, and it was very interesting," he told his daughter-in-law Lara Trump in an interview on her Fox News show.

But Tehran has previously cast doubt on Trump's assertions and the sides remain far apart on key issues.

Trump has also been concerned about parts of the potential deal that would include unfreezing funds for the Iranians, two US officials told NYT. He has been harshly critical of former President Barack Obama for doing the same in the more than decade-old agree-

ment that was signed to curtail Iran's nuclear programme.

According to the Tasnim news agency, "exchanges between Iran and the US regarding the text of a possible memorandum of understanding are ongoing, with both parties regularly proposing amendments. "No agreement has yet been finalised, and it is possible that any agreement will be rejected," it said.

Iran has said it needs the release of \$12 billion in frozen assets before engaging in substantive talks on its nuclear programme, dismissing earli-

er Trump comments that its enriched uranium stockpile would be destroyed as "baseless" according to Iranian media. Tehran has also insisted that Lebanon be included in any deal, despite ongoing fighting, with Beirut accusing Israel of a "scorched-earth policy" as it expands operations against Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Though daily strikes throughout Iran and the Gulf halted after Tehran and Washington struck a temporary ceasefire in April and talks mediated by Pakistan, sporadic fighting has continued. Iran's Revolutionary Guards had shot down a US military drone "about to enter Iranian territorial waters", Iran's state broadcaster IRIB reported, though Washington has not confirmed the incident. AGENCIES

Americans hurt in Kuwait

An Iranian ballistic missile strike on a Kuwaiti air base within the past 24 hours caused minor injuries to several Americans and seriously damaged two MQ-9 Reaper strike drones, according to a person with direct knowledge of the attack, who requested anonymity to describe details that aren't public. The missile was intercepted but falling debris hurt about five people, including contractors and active-duty personnel, the person said.

One Reaper was destroyed and at least one other was seriously damaged. The drones cost about \$30 million each. US Central Command didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. BLOOMBERG

Retain 50-60% of Agniveers in armed forces: Former CoAS

Pune: The current retention policy of Agnipath scheme is not ideal for operational requirements of the armed forces, and 50-60% of trained Agniveers must be absorbed into the regular cadre, former Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande (retd) said.

He was speaking at 'Pune Samvaad', organised by a private organisation in collaboration with the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics. He said only 25% of one batch of Agniveers will be retained after four years of service under the existing policy, and the remaining will have to leave. "The proportion is not ideal for our military, because many units are constantly deployed in border areas. Ideally, 50-60% should be absorbed from an operational point of view."

Terming Agnipath as a "transformative reform" undertaken after independence, he said, "Modifications are necessary to make the scheme more successful and effective."

— Sandip Dighe