

# India, B'desh DG-level border talks conclude

NEW DELHI, June 11 (PTI)

INDIA and Bangladesh on Thursday concluded their four-day DG-level border talks here on various issues including assault on BSF troops and Indian civilians by Bangladeshi nationals and the breaching of the frontier fence by Bangladeshis, officials said.

The 57th edition of these talks were held between the Border Security Force (BSF) and its counterpart Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) at the headquarters of the Indian paramilitary at Lodhi Road.

It was probably the first time in the history of these talks that the customary joint press conference by the directors general (DsG) of the two forces, post the signing of a joint record of discussions, was not held.

A press statement on the discussions held during the talks was awaited till the publication of this report. The Indian delegation was led by BSF DG Praveen Kumar while the Bangladeshi side was headed by BGB DG Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui.

The talks that began after the BGB delegation landed in Delhi on June 8 concluded on Thursday and the guests have returned, officials said.

The meeting assumed significance as it was being held for the first time since the BNP Government took charge in Dhaka early this year and West Bengal elected a new BJP Government.

More than half (2,216 km) of the total 4,096-km-long India-Bangladesh international frontier falls in West Bengal.

# Defence, N-energy top agenda during Modi-Macron talks

NEW DELHI, June 11 (PTI)

**BOLSTERING** bilateral cooperation in defence, civil nuclear energy, innovation and critical technologies will top the agenda during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-level talks with French President Emmanuel Macron.

Modi will undertake a week-long visit to France and Slovakia from Saturday. In France, he will participate in the outreach sessions of the G7 Summit and hold bilateral meeting with Macron.

The Prime Minister is set to hold a series of bilateral meetings with a number of world leaders on the sidelines of the G7 summit. It is learnt that New Delhi and Washington are exploring the possibility of a meeting between PM Modi and US President Donald Trump. However, there is no clarity yet on it.



Ahead of the prime minister's trip to France, diplomatic sources said several French companies are keenly looking at exploring the opportunity in the civil nuclear energy sector considering significant potentials following India's enactment of the SHANTI (Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear

Energy for Transforming India) legislation. India plans to increase its nuclear power capacity from the present 8.78 GW to 100 GW by 2047.

The sources said France is looking at taking forward the Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) project under the framework of 'Make-in-India' and that

there should not be any difficulty in integrating Indian weapon systems into the jets.

Under the MRFA project, 18 Rafale will be supplied by French defence major Dassault Aviation in a fly away condition and the rest will be manufactured in India with around 50 per cent indigenous content. The sources said as many as 12 new bilateral initiatives are likely to be rolled out between India and France during PM Modi's visit.

The prime minister will first travel to the French port city of Nice for a bilateral meeting with President Macron on June 14.

The two leaders will jointly inaugurate Bharat Innovates, a three-day event being held as part of the India-France Year of Innovation to showcase Indian technology ventures from higher education institutions and centrally funded technical institutes.

# India reiterates support to two-state solution to Israel-Palestine conflict

## ■ India to handover \$ 2.5 mn to UN for devpt projects in Palestine

NEW YORK, June 11 (ANI)

INDIA has reiterated its support for a negotiated two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, called for a sustained ceasefire in Gaza, and announced that it will soon hand over USD 2.5 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) as part of its annual contribution.

Speaking at the UNSC Open Debate on “Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Advancing Political Solutions in the Middle East: Mediation and Dialogue for Lasting Peace”, India’s

Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni, said the situation in Gaza has grave humanitarian implications and requires urgent international attention.

He reaffirmed India’s support for “a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel within secure and recognised borders,” describing it as the only path to achieving lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

“We will be handing over in a few days, \$2.5 mn to UNRWA, the first tranche of our annual \$5 mn contribution,” he said.

# Excise duty on ethanol-blended petrol waived

NEW DELHI, June 11 (PTI)

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**THE** Government has waived excise duty on variants of ethanol-blended petrol, a notification by the Finance Ministry said.

The duty waiver is applicable on E22, E25, E27 and E30 variants of petrol. In the notification, the Ministry said excise duty will be 'nil' on petrol with 22 per cent, 25 per cent, 27 per cent and 30 per cent ethanol blend.

The excise duty waiver is aimed encouraging customers to move towards ethanol-blended petrol.

The move come against the backdrop of petrol and diesel prices rising by nearly Rs 7.50 a litre in the second half of May.

The Government had in March cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 10/litre.

# 3rd vessel with Indians onboard attacked off Oman

DUBAI, June 11 (PTI)

**CREW** members of a tanker carrying 20 Indians were evacuated on Thursday after the vessel came under attack off Oman's Shinas port, Indian officials said.

This was the third instance of a merchant ship with Indian crew members coming under attack from the American military off the coast of Oman in the last four days. One of the attacks killed three Indian seafarers.

"Evacuation of crew from MT Jalveer to Shinas port is being coordinated with assistance from Royal Navy of Oman, and shall soon be completed," the Indian Embassy in Muscat said in a post on X.

Earlier, the mission had said it was "closely monitoring" an incident involving a vessel off Shinas port and was coordinating with local authorities for details.

India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) later confirmed that the ship had come under attack.



A visual of the commercial vessel MT Jalveer, with Indian seafarers reportedly on board, attacked off the coast of Oman near the Shinas Port, on Thursday. (ANI)

"These attacks came from the US Navy that is stationed there," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a press briefing in New Delhi, while responding to a question on the incidents involving the vessels.

It was the first public acknowledgement of the US Navy targeting ships with Indian crew.

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways said MT Jalveer had 20 Indian seafarers on board, and all were reported to be safe.

The US Central Command said in a statement that it disabled the Guinea-Bissau-flagged MT Jalveer for allegedly violating its blockade against Iran by attempting to transport Iranian oil.

It said a US aircraft struck the vessel's engine room after the crew "repeatedly failed to comply with directions from US forces".

The latest incident came a day after a commercial vessel - identified as the Palau-

flagged MT Settebello - came under attack off the Oman coast. India subsequently summoned the US charge d'affaires and registered a strong protest over the incident.

Settebello had 24 Indian crew members on board. Of them, 21 were rescued while three were initially reported missing. Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said on Thursday that the three Indian seafarers missing after Wednesday's attack had been found dead.

Earlier, on Monday, all 24 Indian crew members of another merchant tanker - the Palau-flagged MT Marivex - were rescued in coordination with Omani authorities following a missile attack on the vessel off the Oman coast.

The MEA said two of the vessels involved in the incidents this week were operating under US sanctions, while one was in the non-compliant category.

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**'3 missing Indian seafarers onboard MT Settebello confirmed dead'**

NEW DELHI, June 11 (PTI)

**THREE** Indian seafarers onboard the Palau-flagged MT Settebello, initially reported missing after the US military strike on the commercial vessel off Oman coast, are now confirmed dead, Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said on Thursday. (Contd on page 5)

# UK Defence Secretary quits

## Says Govt isn't willing to spend enough on military

LONDON, June 11 (AP)

BRITISH Defence Secretary John Healey unexpectedly resigned on Thursday, saying the Government is not willing to spend enough on the military at a time of rising threat.

Healey told Prime Minister Keir Starmer that the Government's defence investment plan falls "well short of what is required at this dangerous time."

Publication of the plan has been delayed amid reports of disagreement between the Defence Ministry and the Treasury. "You have been unable, and



John Healey

the Treasury has been unwilling, to commit the resources that the nation

needs to defend the country at this time of rising threats," Healey wrote in a resignation letter. "I am now left with no other option to submit my resignation as your Defence Secretary," he said.

Healey has been UK Defence Chief since the Labour Party Government was elected in July 2024 and is regarded as a capable and serious

minister. Starmer has pledged to boost UK defence spending to 2.5 per cent of gross domestic product by 2027 and 3 per cent by 2034. But many in the military say that is not fast enough.

# First 'Made in India' C-295 aircraft completes maiden test flight

VADODARA, June 11 (ANI)

The first "Made in India" Airbus C295 military transport aircraft has successfully conducted its maiden test flight from the Final Assembly Line (FAL) in Vadodara, marking a significant milestone for India's aviation

and defence manufacturing



sector. Airbus Defence said, "The first 'Made in India' Airbus C295 military transport aircraft has completed its first test flight from the Final Assembly Line in Vadodara, marking a milestone for Indian aviation and defence. This maiden test flight is a crucial step in the aircraft's

post production testing process. As the first of 40 aircraft to be built in India, the test flight advances the programme's objective of delivering the first 'Made in India' C295 aircraft this year to the Indian Air Force."

The company said the successful test flight represents a

major step forward in the C295 India programme and supports the Government of India's "Make in India" initiative.

Calling the project a "game changer", Airbus Defence stated, "A game changer in India's 'Make in India' vision, the C295 India programme is the first

instance of a military aircraft being manufactured in India by the private sector. The programme's progress reflects the steady and dedicated work of Airbus, Tata Advanced Systems Limited and the several Indian MSMEs, which are manufacturing parts across India."