

Need to protect forests across country, says SC

NEW DELHI, June 18 (PTI)

THE Supreme Court on Thursday said there was a need to protect forests across India, noting that some States like Jharkhand have natural ecosystems which must be preserved.

The observations came from a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana which was hearing a plea filed by the Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board (JSPCB).

“There are few States where we can really protect our natural ecosystem and you (Jharkhand) are one of them,” the CJI told the counsel appearing for the JSPCB.

The bench observed that some of the States have natural paradises like forests and they need to be protected.

The top court was hearing a petition challenging an order of the Jharkhand High Court (HC).

The High Court had in April passed directions relating to consent for stone mining or establishing stone crushers from the boundaries of forests or forest land. In January, the HC had

directed that no consent should be granted for stone mining or stone crushers within one km measured from the demarcated boundaries of protected forests within the State.

The HC had passed the order in January while hearing a petition challenging a notification issued by the JSPCB which reduces the minimum distance for setting up stone mines and stone crushers around forest or forest land from the previously notified 400-500 metres to 250 metres. In its April order, the HC had said the restriction on the grant of consents would apply to the zone of 500 metres from the boundaries of forests or forest land insofar as stone mining was concerned, and to the zone of 400 metres insofar as stone crushers were concerned.

During the hearing on Thursday, the top court observed the authority had abruptly reduced the distance.

The counsel appearing for JSPCB referred to the observations made by the HC and said everything was stalled.

Israeli forces will stay in S Lebanon: Netanyahu

TYRE, June 18 (AP)

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday that Israel's military will stay in southern Lebanon, where it has occupied up to 10 kilometres from the border.

The remarks were his first comment since the US-Iran deal was signed. Netanyahu said Israel must "maintain a security zone in southern Lebanon, and it requires that we must not leave there as long as Israel's security needs require it."

He has made similar comments in the past about Israel's refusal to withdraw from southern Lebanon.

The US-Iran deal to end the war in the Middle East, signed overnight, also calls for an end to the war in Lebanon, where Israel has been fighting the militant Hezbollah group, but it's unclear what that means in practice.

Electronics manufacturing becomes 3rd-largest goods export category from India: Vaishnaw

NEW DELHI, June 18 (IANS)

ELECTRONICS manufacturing has surged forward to become the third-largest category among goods exported from India, according to Union Minister for Electronics and IT, Ashwini Vaishnaw.

The Minister lauded the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in transforming electronics manufacturing into a premier pillar of the national economy.

India's electronics manufacturing industry has surged to an unprecedented value of Rs 13 lakh crore. From initially target-



ing a place in the top 10 export categories, electronics consecutively climbed from the 9th rank

up through 7th, 5th, and 4th positions. Vaishnaw, along with Maharashtra Chief Minister

Devendra Fadnavis, inaugurated the high-tech advanced manufacturing facility of Jabil at Ranjangaon, Pune. The Minister highlighted how artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved into a powerhouse for global progress, stressing the strategic necessity of anchoring its infrastructure within the country.

He emphasised that AI data centres have become a very large growth engine across the world today, making it a crucial priority under the Prime Minister's Make in India plan to ensure that the major electronic components powering these data centres.

Chinese FM Wang Yi to attend BRICS NSAs meeting in Delhi

BEIJING, June 18 (PTI)

CHINESE Foreign Minister Wang Yi will attend the



meeting of the National Security Advisors of BRICS countries to be held in New

Delhi on June 22-23, Beijing announced on Thursday.

The BRICS National Security Advisors Meeting is a high-level platform that brings together the National Security Advisors (NSAs) of the 11 BRICS member-states to exchange views on key security challenges.

Wang Yi will attend the meeting upon invitation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing in Beijing.

Wang will exchange views with other BRICS member states on the current international security situation and major international and regional issues, Lin said.

ICG inducts hovercraft built indigenously



NEW DELHI, June 18 (PTI)

THE first of the six hovercraft being built by a firm for the Indian Coast Guard, which aims to enhance ICG's operational effectiveness across a broad spectrum of maritime duties and reinforce its ability to respond to emerging challenges, was inducted into service on Thursday, officials said.

The air cushion vehicle has been designed and constructed in India and reflects the growing strength of the nation's maritime industrial base, they said.

In a significant milestone towards strengthening the ICG's capabilities and advancing the national vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the first indigenously-constructed air cushion vehicle (ACV), H-561, was inducted into service on June 18 at Chowgule & Company Private Limited, Goa, the force said.

"The hovercraft aims to enhance ICG's operational effectiveness across a broad spectrum of maritime duties and reinforce its ability to respond to emerging challenges. Its induction would further the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and serve as a reflection of the growing strength of the maritime industrial base of the country," it said.

The induction ceremony was held at the shipyard's Rassaim facility in the presence of senior officials of the ICG and representatives from the shipbuilding industry.

The occasion marks the successful culmination of sustained efforts by multiple stakeholders towards enhancing indigenous defence manufacturing capabilities and fostering self-reliance in critical maritime platforms.

The project represents an important step in promoting indigenous innovation, strengthening domestic shipbuilding expertise and supporting the government's commitment towards building a resilient and self-sufficient defence ecosystem, the officials said.

Ukraine drones hit Moscow oil refinery in major attack, flights disrupted

MOSCOW, June 18 (AP)

UKRAINE struck a major Moscow oil refinery Thursday for a second time in a week, sending huge plumes of black smoke over the capital and disrupting flights at its airports in one of its biggest drone attacks since Russia's full-scale invasion over four years ago, officials said.

Ukraine has repeatedly targeted Russian oil facilities, aiming to cut Moscow's revenue for the war and make Russians feel the consequences of the invasion. Some areas have reported fuel

shortages. The attack by dozens of drones came hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he had held "an important coordination call" with the presidents of the United States and France and had won key pledges of further support from this week's G7 summit.

"If Ukraine is going to burn, your Moscow will burn too," Zelenskyy said, adding that the attack was part of Kyiv's effort to bring Russian President Vladimir Putin to the negotiating table. "It is time to end the aggression, time to end this war."

Zelenskyy was expected to hold talks in Brussels later Thursday with NATO and European Union leaders, including about the possibility of a continental system to defend against ballistic missiles. Russia has relentlessly struck Ukraine with those types of missiles, which air defences struggle to counter.

The Moscow attack was the latest embarrassment for Putin, after a Ukrainian drone attack on his hometown of St Petersburg earlier this month as he welcomed foreign VIPs to his showcase economic forum in the city.

US, Iran sign initial deal to end war

Eases sanctions on Iran; Strait to open



US President Donald Trump signs the Iran Memorandum of Understanding at the Palace of Versailles, in France. The White House said Trump signed the memorandum aimed at ending the conflict with Iran during his visit to France. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, France President Emmanuel Macron and others are also seen. (PTI)

WASHINGTON, June 18 (AP)

PRESIDENT Donald Trump signed an agreement with Iran on Wednesday that calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium and waives US-backed sanctions on the country, immediately allowing Iran to sell its oil freely in a major concession from Washington, according to details released by both countries.

The agreement calls for a permanent end to hostilities and starts a 60-day negotiating clock to reach a final deal on the future of Iran's nuclear programme, though Trump left the door open to resume attacks.

It appears to offer Iran several benefits up front while extracting little in return.

The deal has been shrouded

in secrecy and confusion for days. US officials refused to disclose the terms even after saying Trump and Vice President JD Vance digitally signed it over the weekend.

Trump signed a physical copy on Wednesday while dining with French President Emmanuel Macron at Versailles, the palace where many historic agreements have been signed over the centuries, ending wars or territorial disputes.

The White House had planned a signing ceremony on Friday in Switzerland, but its fate is now

uncertain, with conflicting information from the US, Iran and Pakistan.

"It's signed," Trump said as he left the dinner at Versailles, which followed his trip to the Group of Seven summit in France.

In a video posted online by a White House aide, Trump was seen seated at a table next to Macron signing a paper copy of the agreement.

Trump then handed the document and pen to Secretary of State Marco Rubio as people in the room applauded.

"This was not easy," Trump said right before he signed it, according to a video posted to social media by Macron.

In Tehran, a stone-faced

President Masoud Pezeshkian signed the deal on behalf of Iran, according to the state-run IRNA news agency, which posted images of him holding up the deal with his signature and Trump's. US officials dictated draft language to journalists after days of secrecy, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Iranian state TV later released text that largely tracked what the US put out.

(Contd on page 5)

Read Editorial
VOICE OF REASON
on page 8

Mediator Pak signs peace MoU

ISLAMABAD, June 18 (PTI)

PAKISTAN Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday signed the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding - aimed at restoring peace in West Asia - as the key mediator of the negotiations, his office said.

"Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif signed the Islamabad MoU as a guarantor. Signatures of US President Donald Trump and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian are present on the Islamabad MoU," the Sharif's office said on X.

Later Sharif congratulated Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the peace agreement on a phone call.

'MoU stipulates guarantee of Lebanon's territorial integrity'

TEHRAN, June 18 (ANI)

IRANIAN Foreign Ministry spokesman Ismail Baghaei in his interview with *Al-Akbar*, said that the peace memorandum stipulates the other party's guarantee of Lebanon's sovereignty and ter-

ritorial integrity. *Al Akhbar* is known to be sympathetic to Lebanon's Hezbollah. In Iran's view, this means the complete withdrawal of occupying forces from Lebanese territory,



Ismail Baghaei

as Baghaei explains. He said that on non-fulfillment of the commitment, the memorandum will be "nullified," and subsequent negotiations will not lead to a final agreement

unless there is a complete cessation of hostilities and an end to the occupation.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman also addressed the issue of Lebanon's reconstruction, stating that "Iran is among the countries that have

(Contd on page 5)

Modi meets top CEOs in France

Discusses investment and expansion plans in India

PARIS, June 18 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday met leading business executives here and held discussions focusing on investment opportunities and expansion plans in India.

The CEOs who met the Prime Minister represented a wide range of sectors, including sustainable construction, mobility and AI.

Modi is currently in France, where he participated in the G7 Summit over the last two days and held talks with several world leaders, including US President Donald Trump.

Modi met Benoit Bazin, Chairman and CEO of Saint-Gobain, and discussed opportunities in the materials and construction sector, with a particular

(Contd on pg 5)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with Mistral AI Co-Founder and CEO Arthur Mensch and Saint-Gobain Chairman and CEO Benoit Bazin (R) in Paris, France. (PTI)

