

## India to host BRICS NSAs' Meet on June 22-23

NEW DELHI, June 20 (IANS)

**INDIA** will host the BRICS National Security Advisers' Meeting on June 22-23 under its chairship, bringing together top security officials from member countries to deliberate on evolving global security challenges and strengthen cooperation on key strategic issues. The meeting will be chaired by NSA Shri Ajit Doval and will see participation from National Security Advisers and heads of delegation from BRICS members.

During the two-day meeting, delegates will exchange views on the theme "Non-traditional security challenges confronting the world today." The discussions are expected to focus on the rapidly changing security landscape and the growing impact of emerging technologies on global and national security.

"During the meeting, the NSAs/Heads of Delegation of BRICS Member Countries will exchange views on the theme 'Non-traditional security challenges confronting the world today,'" the Ministry said.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Russian NSA Sergei Shoigu and other top BRICS security officials will converge in New Delhi on Monday.

In addition, the National Security Advisers will review the outcomes of the recently concluded BRICS Joint Working Groups on Counter-Terrorism and on Security in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies. The review is expected to help shape future cooperation among BRICS nations.

# Nationwide mock drill held ahead of NEET-UG re-exam

## Comprehensive arrangements in place: NTA

NEW DELHI, June 20 (PTI)

**A NATIONWIDE** mock drill was conducted across the country on Saturday on the eve of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination as part of efforts to ensure smooth, secure and transparent conduct of the medical entrance test, officials said.

In a statement, the National Testing Agency (NTA) said it has put in place “comprehensive arrangements” to ensure a “fair, secure and candidate-friendly” conduct of re-examination.

More than 22.79 lakh medical aspirants will appear for the re-examination on Sunday, nearly seven weeks after the original test was cancelled following allegations of a paper leak that triggered nationwide outrage, political sparring and legal challenges.

The re-examination will be held from 2 pm to 5.15 pm across 551 cities in India and 14 cities abroad. Candidates with disabilities (PwD/PwBD) eligible for compensatory time will be allowed to write the examination till 6.20 pm.

Candidates have been asked to report to their examination centres between 11 am and 1.30 pm. “Entry gates will close

sharp at 1.30 pm, and no candidate will be permitted entry thereafter under any circumstance,” the agency said. The examination is being conducted in English and 12 Indian languages. On exam day, candidates have been advised to carry their admit card, a valid photo identity proof and two passport-size photographs.

The NTA said security and surveillance arrangements for the re-examination include more than 95,000 examination rooms, each fitted with CCTV, and a total of 1,38,560 CCTV cameras being monitored live at the national, state and ministry levels. The CCTV feeds are also being analysed through AI-based tools to flag anomalies, while 51,311 jammers have been deployed to guard against electronic malpractice.

On the ground, the NTA has deployed two invigilators in every examination room and more than 10 additional functionaries at each centre. Candidate verification and frisking arrangements have been strengthened with 38,795 frisking staff and 48,448 biometric personnel, with biometric manpower doubled and supported by face authentication.

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# Israel strikes Lebanon despite ceasefire

## US-Iran deal is under threat

■ By Kareem Chehayeb and Bassem Mroue

TYRE (Lebanon), June 20 (AP)

ISRAELI strikes on southern Lebanon on Saturday killed at least 16 people, including two children, hours after reports emerged of a ceasefire agreement. The persistent fighting threatened an interim agreement

between the United States and Iran to end the war in the Middle East.

Lebanon's National News Agency said the strikes hit the southern town of Nabatiyeh and nearby villages. At least seven people remained trapped under the rubble, it said.

Mediators were scrambling to halt the fighting between Israel and the

militant Lebanese Hezbollah group, after a heavy exchange on Friday killed at least 47 people in Lebanon and four Israeli soldiers.

An Israeli military official said Hezbollah had fired more than 50 projectiles at Israeli forces in southern Lebanon overnight, prompting the military to start targeting the militant group there.

The official spoke anonymously in line with regulations. The army said it struck dozens of Hezbollah targets and militants in southern Lebanon, including rocket-launching positions and Hezbollah command centers.

On Friday, Israeli ambassador to Washington, Yechiel Leiter, said on X that Israel "remains firmly committed



Smoke rises over the Lebanese city of Nabatieh after Israeli strikes carried out despite the announcement of a renewed ceasefire.

to an immediate ceasefire" if Hezbollah honors the agreement and ceases hostilities.

On Saturday, Hezbollah said it had committed to the ceasefire but blamed

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## Peace talks today, Iran closes strait over Lebanon fighting

TYRE, June 20 (AP)

IRAN dealt two quick blows to the interim agreement with the United States on Saturday, angered by Israel's continued attacks in Lebanon, saying it had closed the Strait of Hormuz and also announcing that while its negotiators were going to Switzerland for talks, not much is likely to happen there.

Key mediator Pakistan, meanwhile, said the technical-level talks will begin on Sunday in Burgenstock, Switzerland, with Qatari mediators also participating.

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# WIN FOR IRAN - RELIEF FOR US

Washington commits to working with regional partners on a reconstruction plan worth "at least \$300 billion" for Iran, and to eventually terminating UN, IAEA and unilateral American sanctions before the final deal.

BY ASHOK N AYERS

**T**HE war that began on February 28, when American and Israeli strikes targeted Iran's nuclear infrastructure, formally ended on Wednesday with the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding — not in a Geneva ballroom with cameras rolling, but quietly and electronically, then sealed in person by President Donald Trump at the Palace of Versailles during a G7 dinner hosted by Emmanuel Macron.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed separately in Tehran, posting an image of the document on social media and calling it "a historic document and a message from a powerful Iran."

"The choreography of this signing — remote, hurried, devoid of the grand ceremonial reset that had been planned for Switzerland — turned out to be a fitting metaphor for the deal itself: a transaction struck under pressure, with both sides racing to claim the upper hand in the story they tell their own publics.

The formal Geneva signing ceremony, once billed as the moment the war officially ends, has effectively been overtaken by events. Pakistan's Shehbaz Sharif, who mediated the talks alongside Qatar, postponed his own trip once it became clear the Islamabad MoU had already been electronically signed and entered into force.

What remains on the Geneva calendar now is technical-level negotiation — the unglamorous business of converting fourteen points of political intent into the far more complicated final agreement that both governments insist must come within sixty days, "extendable with mutual consent."

Stripped of the spin, the Islamabad MoU is a short, deliberately vague instrument — roughly 800 words against the hundreds of pages that made up the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

It declares an immediate and permanent end to hostilities "on

all fronts, including Lebanon," commits both sides to mutual non-interference, and sets the sixty-day clock for a substantive final deal. The operational core is maritime and military: the United States begins dismantling its naval blockade immediately and is to complete the withdrawal of forces from Iran's vicinity within thirty days of the final agreement, while Iran commits to clearing mines and technical obstacles so commercial shipping can resume through the Strait of Hormuz — free of charge

firing, not for negotiation."

The instinct to compare this to the Obama-era JCPOA is understandable but misleading. That agreement was a single-issue document — enrichment levels, centrifuge counts, inspection protocols — built almost entirely around the nuclear file. The Islamabad MoU is a wartime ceasefire wrapped around a maritime-security bargain, with the nuclear question deferred to a future negotiation rather than resolved now. It resembles less a non-proliferation treaty than an

armistice with an economic rider attached.

That combination — disengagement without humiliation, deterrence without occupation — is precisely the kind of offshoring-balancing outcome American presidents have favoured in the Middle East for two decades. Trump gets to claim he ended a war, reopened a fifth of the world's oil flow, and avoided what could have become a Vietnam-style entanglement.

But the more interesting story is what Iran extracted. Tehran's parliamentary Speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, was unsparing in calling the deal "a record of America's failure," arguing Iran negotiated "from a position of strength" because Washington had failed to achieve its stated war aims.

The regime survived intact — Pezeshkian signed his copy with a portrait of the Supreme Leader's slain predecessor and his successor hanging behind him, a deliberate signal that nothing fundamental has changed inside Iran. Sanctions are scheduled for phased termination.

Oil exports can resume immediately via Treasury waivers. A reconstruction fund north of \$300 billion is now part of the written record, regardless of how Washington tries to characterise its funding source. And critically, Iran's missile arsenal — the capability Israel and hawks in Washington most wanted constrained — was kept off the table entirely.

The sixty-day clock is the real test. Down-blending enriched uranium, defining sanctions of schedules, and converting "at least \$300 billion" from a sentence into a financing mechanism are the kind of granular, trust-dependent negotiations that the JCPOA took nearly two years to complete. If they stall, the Islamabad MoU will be remembered as a temporary cessation of hostilities. If they hold, it will be remembered as proof that Iran, battered but unbroken, out-negotiated a superpower that wanted out of the Middle East more than Iran wanted out of the deal. (IPA)



US President Donald Trump and (R) Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signing the peace MoU separately. (AP)

for sixty days, after which Tehran will negotiate a permanent administration of the strait with Oman and other Gulf states.

On the economic side, Washington commits to working with regional partners on a reconstruction plan worth "at least \$300 billion" for Iran, and to eventually terminating UN, IAEA and unilateral American sanctions on an "agreed schedule" tied to the final deal.

Iran, for its part, reaffirms — in line with its existing Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations — that it will not build nuclear weapons, and agrees to a "minimum methodology" of down-blending its near-weapons-grade uranium stockpile under IAEA supervision, details to be hammered out later. Notably, and pointedly, Iran's missile programme is excluded from the agreement altogether; Tehran's Foreign Ministry has said bluntly that its missiles are "only for

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Tehran's parliamentary Speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, was unsparing in calling the deal "a record of America's failure," arguing Iran negotiated from a position of strength because Washington had failed to achieve its stated war aims.

# India, S Korea discuss ties in digital governance, citizen-centric service

NEW DELHI, June 20 (PTI)

INDIA and South Korea on Saturday discussed possible cooperation between the two countries in digital governance, e-government, public administration, capacity building and citizen-centric service delivery.

The discussion came up during a meeting between Republic of Korea Minister of Interior and Safety Yoon Hojung and Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh.

The two leaders, accompanied by respective delegations, held bilateral talks lasting over an hour, a statement issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

best practices in public grievance redressal systems, it said.

Welcoming the Korean delegation, Singh highlighted India's significant strides in digital governance, public service delivery, and grievance redressal mechanisms under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Union Minister said India and Korea are both vibrant democracies with shared values, heritage and commitment to rule of law. He said that both the countries are bound together by the historical ties of the marital connection between Princess Suriratna of Ayodhya and King Suro of then Gaya's confederacy and stressed that the strong



MoS Jitendra Singh holds a bilateral meeting with South Korea Interior and Safety Minister Yoon Ho-joong during the latter's visit to India, in New Delhi. (PTI)

Singh said that the ministries concerned of both the countries are in active discussion for finalisation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote cooperation in the field of public administration and Government innovation.

Discussions between the two sides focused on strengthening collaboration in areas such as digital transformation of government services, application of emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, in public administration, capacity building of civil servants, citizen participation in governance, and

bonds still have great resonance.

Singh also talked about the recent visit of President Lee Jae Myung that has led to forward-looking outcomes across key sectors including trade and investment, ports and maritime affairs, digital and fintech, science and technology, culture, sports, etc.

He highlighted India's initiatives such as CPGRAMS (Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System) portal, Digital Life Certificate for pensioners and the use of technology-enabled governance platforms to improve service delivery and transparency.

# Indian missions worldwide hold yoga sessions

KUWAIT CITY, June 20 (IANS)

SEVERAL Indian diplomatic missions worldwide on Saturday organised yoga sessions ahead of the 12th International Day of Yoga, underscoring the importance of holistic health, well-being and inner harmony. This year's International Day of Yoga, to be celebrated on Sunday across the world, is being observed under the theme "Yoga for Healthy Ageing", focusing on yoga's contribution to healthier, more active and fulfilling lives across generations.

Marking the occasion, the Embassy of India in Kuwait organised a yoga session at the Boulevard Cricket Stadium on Saturday as part of the 3-day Yoga Festival in Kuwait that began on June 19. According to the Indian Embassy, a vibrant gathering of more than 2200 attendees, including diplomats, Government officials, community leaders, students, and yoga enthusiasts from across Kuwait,

participated in the mass yoga session. The event was attended by Sheikha Shaikha Al Sabah, Padma Shri and president of the Kuwait Yoga Committee, and Nouf Marwaai, Padma Shri and founder of the Arab Yoga Foundation in Saudi Arabia and president of the Asian Yogasana Sports Federation.

As a run-up event to the 12th International Day of Yoga, the Embassy of India in Finland and

Suomi-Intia Seura, a Finnish-Indian society, jointly organised a Midnight Yoga Session at Ounasvaara in the Finnish city of Rovaniemi on the Arctic Circle. "Celebrated under the theme 'Yoga for Healthy Ageing', the event brought together participants to celebrate the timeless benefits of yoga amidst the unique setting of the Arctic midnight sun," the Indian Embassy in Finland posted on X.

Meanwhile, as part of the celebration, Na Heal, a wellness organisation in the Philippines, in collaboration with the Embassy of India, conducted a yoga session at the Department of Budget and Management in Manila. "The session witnessed enthusiastic participation from yoga practitioners. It also marked another meaningful step toward strengthening people-to-people connections, in line with the shared vision of the leadership of India and the Philippines," the Indian Embassy in the Philippines posted on X.

## 12th International Day of Yoga