

Jaishankar meets Mongolian counterpart to review ties

ULAANBAATAR, June 22 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met his Mongolian counterpart Battsetseg Batmunkh on Monday and reviewed progress in bilateral cooperation in development projects, capacity building, security and multilateral fora.

Jaishankar, who arrived in Ulaanbaatar on the first leg of a two-nation visit that will also take him to South Korea, said he was delighted to meet Batmunkh.

“Our discussions reflected the warmth, strength and promise of our Strategic Partnership. Reviewed the progress in our cooperation in development projects, capacity building, culture, education, security and multilateral fora,” he said in a post on X.

The two leaders also discussed opportunities in mining, clean energy and agri processing. “As a third neighbour and a spiritual partner, India stands ready to advance its close and cordial ties with Mongolia,” Jaishankar said.

Earlier, Mongolia’s State Secretary Munktushig Ilkhanajav extended a warm welcome to the External Affairs Minister upon his arrival.

“Look forward to fruitful engagements to advance our special partnership,” Jaishankar said.

From Mongolia, Jaishankar will travel to the Republic of Korea on Wednesday for the final leg of his two-day visit.

In Seoul, Jaishankar will hold discussions with his South Korean counterpart Cho Hyun. He will also deliver the keynote speech at the Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity on Thursday.

The Jeju Forum is a platform to discuss timely



Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets his Mongolian counterpart Battsetseg Batmunkh, in Ulaanbaatar.

(PTI)

global issues, with leaders and experts from various fields participating. The minister’s visit underscores India’s commitment to strengthening ties with its Asian partners amid broader efforts to enhance regional cooperation and stability.

The Mongolia leg of the visit is expected to focus on reviewing bilateral cooperation and strengthening long-standing ties between the two countries.

Crude oil prices fall 3%

NEW DELHI, June 22 (IANS)

GLOBAL crude oil prices declined sharply by up to 3 per cent on Monday after talks between the United States and Iran concluded in Switzerland, easing concerns over supply disruptions and raising hopes of increased Iranian oil exports.



International benchmark Brent crude fell more than 2 per cent to around \$79 a barrel after briefly rising above \$82 at the start of trading, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude traded near \$75 per barrel, a decrease of 3 per cent. The decline came after senior US and Iranian officials reportedly wrapped up the first round of talks aimed at extending a fragile ceasefire and reducing tensions in the region.

However, oil prices had already fallen more than 8 per cent last week amid expectations that cargoes stranded in the Gulf could be released and that US sanctions on Iranian oil exports could eventually be eased as part of a broader agreement.

Petrol, diesel margins above pre-conflict levels: Report

NEW DELHI, June 22 (PTI)

PROFITABILITY at state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) is set to improve as falling crude oil prices lift fuel marketing margins, although rising debt levels and uncertainty over fuel taxes could limit the sector's longer-term earnings outlook, according to a JP Morgan report.



Composite margins on petrol and diesel sales at state-run refiners and fuel retailers are now above levels seen before the recent Middle East conflict, it said. "Our estimates for OMC composite margins on petrol and diesel are now higher than pre-war levels. Losses on LPG are still elevated, but should also start to track oil down soon," JP Morgan said adding earnings in April-June - the first quarter of current fiscal year - will likely be hurt by large inventory losses, but 2Q profitability should be better.

Doval, Iran security official discuss West Asia issue

■ NSAs of BRICS nations to meet today, to hold extensive discussions on the security scenario in the West Asia region

NEW DELHI, June 22 (PTI)

NATIONAL Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Monday held wide-ranging talks with senior Iranian security official Ghadir Nezamipour focusing on the evolving security environment in West Asia.

Nezamipour, Deputy Secretary for Defence Affairs at Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), is in New Delhi to attend a conclave of BRICS.

"Both sides reviewed the ongoing situation in West Asia. They also discussed cooperation under the BRICS platform and India-Iran bilateral ties," External Affairs Ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said on social media. It is the first visit to India by a senior official from Iran after it struck a peace agreement with the US.

The NSAs of BRICS nations will hold extensive discussions on the security scenario in the region on Tuesday. The conclave officially begins on Monday.

India to host key BRICS security conclave amid rising geopolitical tensions.



National Security Advisor Ajit Doval during a meeting with Deputy Secretary for Defence Affairs of Iran's SNSC, Ghadir Nezamipour, on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS National Security Advisors' Meeting, in New Delhi. (PTI)

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Russian NSA Sergei Shoigu, and other top BRICS security officials are set to be part of the deliberations.

The conclave will be chaired by NSA Doval. New Delhi is hosting the conclave in its capacity as the current chair of the influential grouping.

BRICS, originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, expanded in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with Indonesia joining in 2025.

BRICS has emerged as an influential grouping as it brings

together 11 major emerging economies of the world, representing around 49.5 per cent of the global population, around 40 per cent of the global GDP and around 26 per cent of the global trade.

The top BRICS security officials are expected to deliberate extensively on the overall regional security scenario including the situation in West Asia as well as the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The Indian side is likely to raise its concerns over terrorism including cross-border terrorist activities targeting Jammu and Kashmir by terror groups based in Pakistan.

US clears \$482 mn support package for India's Apaches, M777 howitzers



NEW DELHI, June 22 (IANS)

THE United States has formally notified a proposed sale of sustainment support services and related equipment worth an estimated \$482.2 million for India's Apache attack helicopters and M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers aimed at enhancing the operational readiness of the Indian Armed Forces.

The US Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) -- which administers the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme -- has issued the notification in the Federal Register after the Department of State informed Congress last month about the possible sales.

According to the notification, India has requested long-term sustainment support for its M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers, including ancillary equipment, spare parts, repair and return services, training, technical assistance, field service representatives, depot-level capability and other logistics support.

The proposed M777 support package is valued at approximately \$230 million.

In addition, in a separate notification, the US Department of Defense said India has also sought sustainment support for its AH-64E Apache attack helicopters, including engineering, technical and logistics support services from the US Government and contractors, technical publications, personnel training and related programme support.

The Apache support package is estimated to cost \$198.2 million.

The principal contractors for the Apache programme will be Boeing Company and Lockheed Martin, while BAE Systems, based in the United Kingdom, will serve as the principal contractor for the M777 howitzer support programme.

Iran asserts its authority over Strait after Trump's threat

TEHRAN, June 22 (ANI)

HEAD of the Iranian Parliament's National Security Committee Ebrahim Azizi issued a warning against the US amid the ongoing technical talks on Monday, asserting Iranian authority over the Strait of Hormuz, after President Donald Trump threatened to "take over the Strait."

In a post on X, Azizi slammed Trump for making threats regarding the Strait of Hormuz, stating that it is "neither your personal casino nor the backyard of modern-day pirates" and affirmed that the final decision regarding the diplomatic chokehold rests with the Iranian people and

forces.

"You make threats; we take action. The Strait of Hormuz is neither your personal casino nor the backyard of modern-day pirates; these are Iranian sovereign waters, and the ultimate decision rests with the noble people of Iran and its brave armed forces," he wrote.

His remarks come after US President Donald Trump on Sunday disclosed that he held talks with Iranian officials overnight on Saturday, issuing a stern warning to Tehran against any attempts to block the strategically critical Strait of Hormuz and threatening severe repercussions if such action is taken.

Strait of Hormuz is neither your personal casino nor backyard of modern-day pirates: Iranian lawmaker Azizi

In a direct warning over potential maritime disruption, the US President indicated that Washington would respond with overwhelming force to any blockade of the vital shipping lane.

"You close it, and you won't have a country. You won't even make it back to your f***ng country," Trump told Fox News.

The US President also suggested that Washington could assume direct operational control to secure the global shipping corridor and potentially levy transit fees on oil shipments navigating the waters.

"We may take over the Strait if we have to. I'll blow the sh*t out of them," he said. Warning of economic measures if diplomatic discussions stall, the Republican leader added, "If they don't make a deal, we'll collect tolls." Despite the warning, Iran and the United States have established a direct communication line to "avoid incidents and miscommunication" in the Strait of Hormuz, mediators Qatar and

Pakistan announced on Monday after the first round of high-level talks under a 14-point MoU.

The joint statement issued after the Lake Lucerne Summit in Switzerland's Burgenstock stated, "In addition, a communication line between the parties has been formed for the period mentioned in paragraph 5 of the MoU to avoid incidents and miscommunication with the aim of safe passage for commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz." The MoU states, "The traffic of commercial vessels will immediately start," signalling the immediate resumption of commercial maritime activity throughout the waterway.

Iran halts talks after US threats

TEHRAN, June 22 (Agencies)

IRAN has halted its participation in a four-party talks involving the US, Qatar and Pakistan during ongoing negotiations in Switzerland after the US threats, Iranian Foreign Ministry has announced.

Iran Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei stated that a threatening US statement during the four-party meeting prompted Tehran to declare it would not continue to participate in the talks under such conditions, 'Tasnim News Agency' reported on X.

Qatar and Pakistan tried to keep the talks going. However, Iran said it would not participate in the meeting. The Iranian delegation stressed the need to hold the other side accountable

for fulfilling its commitments. Concerns were raised about the other party's breach of trust, especially about Israel's ongoing violations of the ceasefire, according to 'Tasnim News' Agency.

Iranian state media said talks had paused after the "publication of an insulting message by the US President".

The Iranian delegation then met with Qatari mediators and left the negotiating site, state media said. The senior US diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity to brief journalists on the ongoing talks, said late Sunday that the Iranians remained on site and the negotiations were on.

Iranian state television reported Monday that the Iranian

(Contd on page 5)

Netanyahu rejects Trump's claim that Israel does as he says

TEL AVIV, June 22 (AND)

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back against assertions that he or US President Donald Trump take directives from one another, following remarks from the American leader suggesting Israel follows his commands in West Asia.

Addressing the Jerusalem News Syndicate's International Policy Summit 2026, Netanyahu stated, "President Donald Trump does not do everything I want, nor do I do everything he wants. We are leaders of independent and proud countries; sometimes we don't see eye to eye."

"We stand for our interests. I stand for the interests of Israel and for its security. And often we see eye to eye. Sometimes we don't. But we respect each other's sovereignty and leadership and commitment to our people.", Netanyahu said.



UK PM Keir Starmer resigns

Starmer's resignation means the UK is now on the hunt for its 7th PM in 10 years

■ By Aditi Khanna
LONDON, June 22 (PTI)

KEIR Starmer on Monday announced his resignation as British Prime Minister and the Leader of the Labour Party, setting out a timetable for his successor to be elected in the coming weeks and be in place by September.

The 63-year-old said he will remain in post until a new leader and PM is elected by the governing party and pledged his "full and unequivocal support" to the next incumbent to "ensure an orderly handover of power".

"The question my party is asking now is whether I am best placed to lead us into the next general election," said an emotional Starmer, in his address



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer and wife Victoria stand in front of 10, Downing Street door after speaking to the media in London, on Monday. (AP/PTI)

from the steps of Downing Street. "I have heard the answer of my parliamentary party to that question and I accept that answer with good grace. Every decision I have taken has been about putting the country I love first. That is why I will resign as leader of the Labour Party," he said.

Starmer said he had spoken to King Charles III on Monday

Read Editorial
ANOTHER EXIT IN UK
on page 8

morning to inform him of the decision.

He will now ask the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Labour Party to set out the timetable for selecting his successor, with nominations opening on July 9 and the process to be completed by the summer recess of Parliament, scheduled for July 17.

The NEC will set out the
(Contd on page 5)

Andy Burnham will run to succeed Starmer

LONDON, June 22 (AP)

FORMER Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham has confirmed he will run to succeed Keir Starmer as Labour leader and British Prime Minister.

He posted on social media that he will "put myself forward as part of this process."

Former Health Secretary Wes Streeting, considered another leading contender, said he will back Burnham.

That makes it more likely that Burnham will be selected without a leadership contest. In a post on X, Burnham thanked Starmer for his service and leadership.

"The country expects stability, seriousness and a continued focus on the issues that matter most and that is what it will get," he wrote on X.

He added: "People want to see progress on economic growth, cost of living, public services, housing and opportunities for the next generation. Political change should never distract from the responsibility to improve people's lives."

