

Somnath Ghosh appointed India's next envoy to Malaysia

NEW DELHI, July 1 (PTI)

DIPLOMAT Somnath Ghosh has been appointed India's next High Commissioner to Malaysia, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement on Wednesday.

Ghosh is a 1997-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer.

“Somnath Ghosh (IFS: 1997), presently Consul General, Consulate General of India, Chicago, has been appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to Malaysia,” the MEA said.

“He is expected to take up the assignment shortly,” it said.

US removes four Indian companies from Russia-related sanctions list

■ **By Sagar Kulkarni**

WASHINGTON, July 1 (PTI)

THE US has de-listed four Indian companies from its sanctions list, which were accused of supplying advanced technology and equipment for Russia's military-industrial base.

The companies have been deleted from the Office of Foreign Assets Control's (OFAC) Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (SDN) List.

The four companies include Hyderabad-based RRG Engineering Technologies Private Limited and Lokesh Machines Limited, Ahmedabad-based

Galaxy Bearings and New Delhi-based Shaurya Aeronautics Private Limited, according to details shared by the US Department of the Treasury on Tuesday. The US had sanctioned Galaxy Bearings Ltd in October 2024, accusing it of exporting dozens of high-priority dual-use equipment, including roller bearings and roller assemblies, to Russian entities.

Shaurya Aeronautics Private Ltd was sanctioned for allegedly sending shipments of radar apparatus, radio navigational aid apparatus, radio remote control apparatus and electrical apparatus to Russia.

Japan PM arrives in Delhi; delighted to host you, says Modi

NEW DELHI, July 1 (PTI)

JAPANESE Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi arrived in New Delhi on Wednesday on a three-day visit to India, during which she will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to strengthen bilateral cooperation across trade, investment, defence and other key sectors.

This is Takaichi's first official visit to India. She is visiting at Modi's invitation from July 1 to 3 for the 16th India-Japan annual summit, the MEA earlier said.



Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi waves upon her arrival at the airport, in New Delhi. (PTI)

Takaichi posted on X photos of her arrival in India.

Sharing her post, Modi wrote: "A very warm welcome to India, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi."

"We are delighted to host you on your first visit to India, and I look forward to our wide-ranging discussions tomorrow that will further deepen the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Through our joint efforts, we will continue to advance peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. @takaichi_sanae," he said.

Government slaps notice on Meta

Asks WhatsApp to pause username feature until consultations end

NEW DELHI, July 1 (PTI)

THE Centre on Wednesday issued a notice to Meta regarding the controversial username feature on WhatsApp in India due to concerns about impersonation and fraud, and warned the platform not to roll it out until consultations on the issue are completed "to the satisfaction of the Government".

It has also directed Meta to furnish a detailed explanation on the username feature, backed by relevant documents, within three days.

In the notice, the Government expressed concern that the WhatsApp username feature may "materially increase" cases of online fraud, phishing, digital arrest scams, and impersonation attacks by enabling bad actors



to solicit and message victims.

It has asked Meta to explain why action shouldn't be initiated under IT Act and rules over WhatsApp's new feature that may increase cybercrimes.

The Centre has also reminded Meta that WhatsApp, as a significant social media intermediary, is bound by due diligence obligations under the IT Act and

rules.

WhatsApp, in a statement on Wednesday, defended the feature, citing built-in safeguards to prevent scams and impersonations and protect users.

India is WhatsApp's largest market, with more than 500 million users. "It is felt that the feature may materially increase the incidence of online fraud, phish-

ing, digital arrest scams and impersonation attacks, by enabling bad actors to solicit and message victims.

"Furthermore, this feature may facilitate impersonation and identity spoofing, including impersonation of individuals, public authorities, financial institutions, and government agencies, by permitting the adoption of usernames closely resembling those of genuine persons or institutions," said the notice addressed to Chief Compliance Officer, WhatsApp India Operations. The notice cited provisions of the Information Technology Act and the IT Rules, 2021, including Section 79 on intermediary due diligence obligations, portions of rules 3 and 4 governing intermediary responsibilities and lawful iden-

tification of the first originator of messages, as well as Sections 66C and 66D that deal with identity theft and cheating by impersonation using computer resources. It also referred to intermediary liability under Section 79(3)(a) of the IT Act for aiding, abetting or inducing unlawful acts. "In this regard, you are directed to furnish a detailed explanation, supported by relevant documents, on this new feature, within three days of its receipt," it said.

The notice also directed Meta not to roll out WhatsApp's new feature until the consultation on this point is achieved "to the satisfaction of the Government".

A WhatsApp spokesperson said the ability to use a username is not yet live and will roll out slowly later this year.

India imported record 4.93 mn bpd crude oil

NEW DELHI, July 1 (PTI)

INDIA imported 4.93 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil in June, the highest volume for the month on record, despite geopolitical tensions in West Asia, as per data and analysis from energy intelligence firm Kpler.

Russian crude imports rose to around 2.6 million bpd during the month, reinforcing Russia's position as India's largest oil supplier,



Kpler analyst Sumit Ritolia said. Russian supplies made up for more than half of the country's overall imports in

June, up from 36.5 per cent in May when it had imported 2.13 million bpd from Moscow, according to Kpler data.

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WELL DONE, INDIA!
on page 8

ATF price cut by Rs 5/ltr, commercial LPG price by Rs 183.50/19 kg cylinder

Nayara lowers petrol, diesel rates

NEW DELHI, July 1 (PTI)

AVIATION Turbine Fuel (ATF) and commercial LPG prices were cut on Wednesday as easing tensions in West Asia pulled down international oil prices, while private fuel retailer Nayara Energy lowered petrol and diesel prices, becoming the

first retailer in more than two years to reduce pump rates.

ATF prices were reduced by about Rs 5 per litre, bringing the price in Delhi to around Rs 110 per litre, industry sources said. The reduction is the first since the recent spike triggered by the West Asia conflict.

Oil marketing companies also cut price of commercial LPG by Rs 183.50 per 19-kg cylinder, first cut this year.

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Nirmala embarks on 4-day visit to France

NEW DELHI, July 1 (PTI)

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday embarked on a four-day official visit to France, where she will hold a series of high-level engagements aimed at deepening the India-France Strategic Partnership, strengthening economic cooperation, and

promoting investment.

A key highlight of the visit will be the India-France Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) at Aix-en-Provence, which Sitharaman will co-chair with France's Minister of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Energy Sovereignty, Roland Lescure, an official statement said.

'Ship runs aground in Strait of Hormuz'

DUBAI, July 1 (AP)

A SHIP ran aground in the Strait of Hormuz while using a route not approved by Iran, state television in Tehran reported Wednesday. The report identified the affected vessel as a foreign container ship, but offered no other immediate details.

The report appeared aimed at underlining Tehran's claims to control the strait, which has long been considered by the world as an international waterway and saw a fifth of all oil and natural gas pass through it in peacetime.

Iran has used its ability to choke off the narrow waterway as a key source of leverage since the war began, disrupting global markets for energy and other critical goods.

The report also came as US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump's son-in-law, were in Doha, Qatar, for talks over reaching a permanent end to the Iran war.

Technical talks between diplomats began on Wednesday in Qatar, said two regional officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door discussions.

Those discussions see negotiators aiming to nail down specifics to



pave the way for top leaders to seal an agreement, though the differences over the strait and Lebanon still loom large. Iran offered no immediate acknowledgement of the negotiations starting.

THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ IS A KEY STICKING POINT IN TALKS: Iran and the United States agreed as part of an interim deal to allow ships to pass uncharged for 60 days, but Tehran insisted it must control the routes of the vessels and later charge fees for passage, upending decades of practice in the water-

way.

The US and many Gulf Arab states say they won't agree to the charges. An effort by Oman and a UN agency to launch a new route near Oman's shore sparked attacks across the Mideast over last weekend, highlighting the tensions still gripping the Mideast. Iranian state TV said the ship "ran aground with its cargo because of shallow waters along the route it had chosen and was unable to continue sailing." It said shippers needed to follow the instructions of Iran's paramilitary

Revolutionary Guard in the strait.

The Guard's navy "has repeatedly warned captains, shipowners and officials of shipping companies around the world that any entry or exit through routes other than the Route of Authority' in the Persian Gulf could lead to irreparable incidents," it said.

The report did not mention the two ships Iran attacked in recent days for daring to head out through the strait without Tehran's permission, including one that was carrying crude oil from Qatar.

US negotiators are in Qatar and Iranians are expected: Witkoff and Kushner arrived in Qatar on Tuesday ahead of talks with Qatar mediating. While Iran has insisted it planned no meetings with the Americans, their comments left open the possibility of so-called "indirect negotiations," in which the two nations pass messages through Qatari officials. That has happened multiple times during negotiations in the second Trump administration.

Qatar early on Wednesday morning acknowledged a meeting between the Americans and its Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

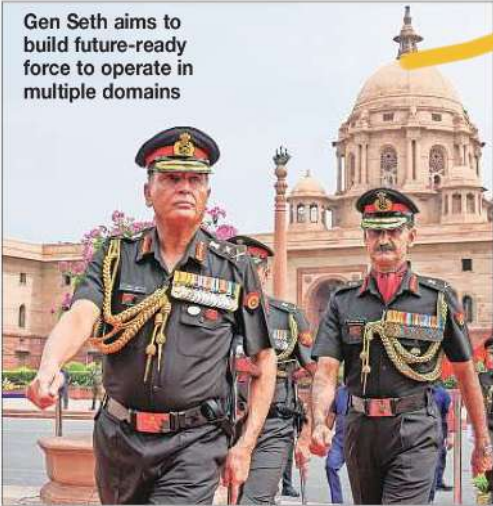
New Army chief unveils 'VIJAY' roadmap

V = Vigilance
I = Innovation
J = Jointness and integration,
A = Aatmanirbhata
Y = 'Yoddha first'

NEW DELHI, July 1 (PTI)

THE Indian Army is a combat-ready, battle-hardened force and the aim is to build a technology-enabled, future-ready Army capable of operating in multiple domains, Army chief General Dhiraj Seth said on Wednesday, as he coined the acronym 'VIJAY' to achieve that goal.

The letters in the acronym stand for - 'V' for vigilance, 'I' for innovation, 'J' for jointness and integration, 'A' for Aatmanirbhata and 'Y' for



Gen Seth aims to build future-ready force to operate in multiple domains

Lt General Dhiraj Seth arrives during a ceremony marking his assumption of charge as the new Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), at the South Block, in New Delhi, Wednesday. (PTI)

'Yoddha first'. General Seth, an accomplished military officer with the rare distinction of heading two operational Army commands along the western front, took charge as the Army chief on Tuesday, succeeding General Upendra Dwivedi, who retired on June 30 after an illustrious career spanning over 40 years.

Speaking to reporters after receiving a guard of honour on the lawns of the South Block on Wednesday, General Seth said the Indian Army is a combat-ready and battle-hardened force, which is "always ready to face all challenges in a battlefield".

"To assume charge as the 31st Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) is a moment of pride and humility for me. I accept this responsibility with deep commitment to the ideals of duty, honour and nation first," he said.

He also offered tribute to the brave soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice for the nation. (Contd on page 5)

Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit takes charge as Vice Chief of IAF

NEW DELHI, July 1 (PTI)

AIR Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, who served as the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff during Operation Sindoor, took charge as the new Vice Chief of the Air Staff on Wednesday, officials said. He succeeded Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor, who superannuated on June 30 after four



(Contd on page 5)

Lt Gen Pushkar takes charge as chief of Southern Command

PUNE, July 1 (PTI)

LIEUTENANT General Rajesh Pushkar, who commanded the 2 Corps during Operation Sindoor, on Wednesday assumed charge as the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Southern Command.

He succeeds Lieutenant General Sandeep

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