

Ukrainian drones hit more Russian oil facilities, set two oil tankers ablaze

KYIV, July 9 (AP)

UKRAINIAN drones on Thursday hit more Russian oil facilities and set two oil tankers ablaze in the Sea of Azov, a day after United States President Donald Trump pledged to grant Ukraine a license to manufacture the Patriot air defence systems.

Ukraine's strikes on oil refineries and other infrastructure across Russia has triggered a widespread fuel crisis with gasoline shortages and fuel rationing reported in multiple regions and drivers waiting for hours to fill their tanks.

Early Thursday, a Ukrainian drone strike triggered a fire at an



oil depot in the city of Tver in western Russia, according to acting regional Governor Vitaly Korolyov.

And in the southern Stavropol region, Governor Vladimir Vladimirov said oil reservoir has

been set ablaze by Ukrainian drones in Vyazniki. He said the authorities ordered the evacuation of residents of several apartment buildings near the facility.

In the Sea of Azov, Ukrainian drones set two oil tankers ablaze, according to Rostov Governor Yuri Slusar, who said that one of the ships was still burning and the crews were evacuated.

The attack was the latest in a series of strikes on oil tankers in the area in recent days, part of Ukraine efforts to cut fuel supplies to Russia-occupied Crimea.

Russia's Defence Ministry said that air defences downed 73 Ukrainian drones from late Wednesday until early Thursday.



Puri rejects E20 fuel criticism, calls it scientifically tested

NEW DELHI, July 9 (IANS)

UNION Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has rejected criticism of ethanol-blended fuel, asserting that E20 petrol is scientifically tested, safe for vehicles and central to India's push for energy self-reliance, while alleging that a misinformation campaign had intensified after the rollout of E85-compatible vehicles.

In a post on X, the Minister said India has been using E15 fuel since April 2023, E19 since April 2024 and E20 since April 2025, with no major issues reported

despite widespread adoption.

"More than 20 crore two-wheelers and over 20 lakh four-wheelers have been running suc-



cessfully on E20 fuel for years, yet suddenly a campaign against ethanol blending has gathered pace," Puri said.

He claimed the criticism intensified after India launched E85 fuel for flex-fuel vehicles on June 5, describing it as a major step towards reducing the country's dependence on imported crude oil. "Look closely at the timeline and the pattern becomes difficult to ignore," the minister said, alleging that fearmongering around ethanol-blended fuels began soon after the launch of E85-compatible vehicles.

"Every litre of ethanol blended into petrol helps reduce crude oil imports, strengthens India's energy security, reduces air pollution, supports domestic farmers and saves valuable foreign exchange," he said.

India, Aus launch PACTS to boost cyber, critical technology co-op

NEW DELHI, July 9 (IANS)

INDIA and Australia on Thursday announced a Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains (PACTS) to deepen cooperation in these sectors and strengthen supply chain resilience by building on the 2020 Framework Arrangement on Cyber and Cyber Enabled Critical Technology Cooperation.

“The PACTS aims to support our shared interest in national and regional security, empower our partners with greater digital choices, make critical supply chains more resilient, and

strengthen global cyber resilience,” the statement from the Ministry of External Affairs said.

The PACTS will pursue a unifying strategic vision across five interrelated pillars supply chain resilience and diversification, critical technology, cybersecurity, digital resilience and defence research collaboration.

Under each interrelated pillar, India and Australia will identify opportunities and specific projects to support collaboration between the private sector, universities, research institutions and Government agencies.

India-Aus seal pacts across nuclear, maritime and mineral sectors

MELBOURNE, July 9 (PTI)

INDIA and Australia on Thursday sealed a raft of landmark pacts spanning civil nuclear energy, maritime security and critical minerals sectors, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese reinforced the vital role of the bilateral partnership in ensuring a peaceful Indo-Pacific.

The agreement on civil nuclear energy to facilitate the commercial supply of uranium from Australia to India to fuel New Delhi's nuclear power projects came nearly 12 years after the two countries inked a historic civil nuclear cooperation pact.

In another significant decision, India and Australia decided to

work expeditiously to firm up the proposed Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement as well as a bilateral investment protection framework.

A joint declaration on defence and security cooperation, a maritime security collaboration roadmap, a joint statement on energy security and a partnership for cyber, critical technologies and supply chains were among 18 pacts signed following summit talks between the two prime ministers. Modi described as "unparalleled" the outcomes from his talks with Albanese, especially in areas of renewable energy, climate action, nuclear energy, critical minerals, technology and education.

The agreements sealed at the summit also included one between the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Maritime Border Command (MBC) of Australia and it will provide cooperation in the fields of

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a joint press conference with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese, in Melbourne, Australia. (PTI)



PM Modi inspects a Guard of Honour during a ceremonial welcome at Government House, in Melbourne, Australia. (PTI)

US, IRAN EXCHANGE ATTACKS IN M-E

Bigger all around attacks threaten interim deal to end war

DUBAI, July 9 (AP)

THE United States launched new airstrikes against Iran early Thursday, and Tehran responded by targeting US-allied Mideast countries in an exchange of fire that threatened an interim deal intended to help end the war in the Middle East.

Back-and-forth attacks, including a day earlier, have repeatedly threatened the ceasefire, but Thursday's appeared bigger all around, with sirens sounding at least three times in Bahrain, home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet headquarters, and missiles targeting Kuwait and Qatar.

Sirens sounded Thursday afternoon in Jordan as well, where the US has stationed troops and aircraft.

An Iranian official accused the US of launching an airstrike later Thursday targeting the area

■ The US said the strikes were intended to 'further degrade' Iran's ability 'to threaten freedom of navigation' in the Strait.

■ Explosions at several locations, including Bushehr, home to Iran's nuclear power plant complex, and southern port cities were reported.

■ The two days of American airstrikes have killed at least 14 people.

around Iran's sole nuclear power plant, and other explosions were reported elsewhere in the country during the afternoon.

The strikes came hours after US President Donald Trump said recent Iranian attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz signalled the end of a fragile ceasefire and threatened to escalate the conflict if they didn't stop.

That raised concerns that the



Explosions seen in Bandar Abbas after US military strikes Iran. (AP)

region could tip back into a war that would engulf several countries and could halt energy shipments through the strait that are crucial for the global economy.

In Iran, the two days of American airstrikes have killed at least 14 people and wounded another 78, Iran's Health Ministry said Thursday - most of those reportedly members of the armed forces.

In Kuwait, the military said falling debris wounded one person as it shot down three ballistic missiles, a cruise missile and 10 drones. Bahrain said it shot down incoming fire, without elaborating. There was no immediate word of damage in Qatar.

The US military's Central Command said it hit some 90 targets across Iran, releasing black-and-white footage of what
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