

India backs 2016 tribunal ruling on SCS, calls for freedom of navigation

NEW DELHI, July 14 (PTI)

INDIA on Tuesday called for upholding the freedom of navigation, overflight and unimpeded commerce in the South China Sea, and backed a 2016 ruling by an international arbitral tribunal that rejected Beijing's extensive territorial claims over the resource-rich region.

New Delhi's remarks on the South China Sea dispute came two days after the US, the UK and a dozen other Western and Asian countries reminded China about the tribunal's verdict that its expansive claims in the region are illegal.

A joint statement was issued

by the US, the UK and 12 other nations on July 12 commemorating the landmark verdict by the tribunal established in The Hague under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

China had rejected the ruling. "India's position on the South China Sea issue is well known. We emphasise the importance of upholding freedom of navigation and overflight, other lawful uses of the sea, and unimpeded commerce consistent with international law, as reflected in UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea)," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a media briefing.

He was asked about the joint statement. "We re-affirm that maritime disputes must be resolved peacefully and in accordance with UNCLOS, and reiterate that the award rendered 10 years ago by the arbitral tribunal is a significant milestone and the basis for peacefully resolving disputes between the parties," he said.

There have been growing concerns over China's sweeping claims of sovereignty over all of the South China Sea, a huge source of hydrocarbons.

Several countries in the region including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei, have counterclaims.

'Hold Pakistan accountable for 'egregious abuses' in PoJK'

NEW DELHI, July 14 (PTI)

INDIA described the ongoing protests in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) as a "direct consequence" of Islamabad's decades-long "systemic exploitation and administrative oppression" in areas under its "forcible" occupation.

PoJK has been witnessing massive protests since last month over inflated living costs, alleged administrative apathy and political discrimination and atrocities against minorities.

There are reports of severe police brutality in which several protesters have been killed and many injured.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a media briefing that New Delhi expects the international community to hold Pakistan "fully accountable" for the "egregious abuses and misdeeds" in PoJK.

"The ongoing protests in PoJK are a direct consequence of Pakistan's decades-long systemic exploitation, denial of fundamental rights, and admin-

istrative oppression in areas under its illegal and forcible occupation," he said.

"Rather than addressing the legitimate grievances of the local populace, the Pakistani state has responded with extreme police brutality, including against helpless women and children, blocking essential supplies, including food and medicine, enforcing internet blackouts, and deploying lethal force against unarmed civilians that has resulted in tragic fatalities," Jaiswal said.

Yemen's Houthis strike Saudi's Abha airport

CAIRO, July 14 (AP)

THE Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen said they launched missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia's Abha International Airport in response to airstrikes they blamed on Riyadh that struck Sanaa International Airport earlier.

No casualties were reported, but the attacks on Monday marked an escalation not seen since a Saudi-led coalition struck Houthi-controlled areas several years ago. Saudi Arabian officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the airstrikes in Yemen.

Houthi military spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree warned airlines against flying through Saudi airspace, saying these warnings should be taken "seriously until the blockade on Sanaa International Airport is lifted." The internationally recognised



Government in Yemen said earlier that the strikes that hit Sanaa International Airport were meant to prevent an Iranian plane from landing. The Houthis vowed to retaliate for the strike, which marked the first major escalation between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia following a period of relative calm. The UNSC, in an emergency meeting on the developments on Monday afternoon, officials expressed concern about the risk of a wider escalation.

India, Maldives make progress on FTA to boost bilateral trade

NEW DELHI, July 14 (IANS)

THE Government on Tuesday said that the first round of negotiations for the India-Maldives Free Trade Agreement (FTA) have been concluded successfully towards expanding bilateral trade and investment engagement.

India is the second-largest trading partner of the Maldives.

Bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$771.76 million in 2025-26, compared to \$679.70 million in 2024-25, registering a growth of 13.54 per cent.

According to a Commerce Ministry statement, negotiating teams from both sides engaged in text-based discussions across eight technical sessions, covering eight policy areas.

Both sides made substantive progress across the negotiating tracks and reached broad convergence on several issues, the statement added. India's negotiating team was led by Chief Negotiator Ujjwal Kumar Ghosh, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce, while the Maldives delegation was led by its Chief Negotiator Yusuf Riza. Last week, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal met his Maldivian counterpart, Mohamed Saeed, Minister of Economic

Development, Transport and Trade of the Maldives.

According to an official statement, the Ministers reviewed the progress of ongoing bilateral economic initiatives, including the India-Maldives FTA negotiations.

As India and the Maldives commemorate 60 years of diplomatic relations, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to

expedite the conclusion of the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

They also agreed to further deepen cooperation in tourism, startups, digital payments, MSMEs and trade

to unlock new opportunities for both countries.

According to the Ministry, the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is expected to further strengthen bilateral economic and trade relations by enhancing market access, facilitating investment, promoting greater economic cooperation and contributing to sustainable economic growth in both countries. Both sides are working towards a broad-based, balanced and comprehensive agreement guided by the principles of fairness and reciprocity, said the Ministry.



Trump wants Gulf allies to pay for US security

WASHINGTON, July 14 (IANS)

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has said that wealthy Gulf nations should reimburse the United States for protecting one of the world's most strategically important regions, arguing that Washington is bearing the cost of defending allies despite no longer depending on Middle Eastern oil.

Speaking to reporters at the White House, Trump said countries benefiting from US military operations should help finance those efforts.

"I want to be reimbursed because we're protecting a very rich portion of the world."

Trump said, the United States

was safeguarding key regional partners while maintaining security in the Gulf. "We're protecting by the countries that we're helping."

He named Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait among countries benefiting from American military protection.

"For instance, you look at the five countries, you have Saudi Arabia, you have UAE, you have Qatar or Qatar, as I always say. You have Qatar, Bahrain... You have Kuwait and you have others, and they will do very well."

Trump argued that the United States was no longer dependent on energy supplies from the region. "We don't need it, but

we need it from the standpoint of protecting allies, etc., etc., including Israel, including Saudi Arabia, including Qatar, including UAE." His comments came as he announced renewed military operations against Iran and said the United States would restore a blockade targeting Tehran. "Anybody doing business with Iran can't go through. Everyone else will be able to go through." The President also defended months of military operations against Iran, claiming they had dramatically weakened Tehran's Armed Forces.

"We knocked out their Navy in a period of one month. We knocked out their air force. Their air force is non-existent."

Trump backs away from threat to charge tolls in Strait

PRESIDENT Donald Trump took a day to reverse his plans to charge a 20% toll on cargo going through the Strait of Hormuz, saying that Middle Eastern countries will instead make investment and trade deals with the US.

"Based on highly productive conversations with Middle East leadership, I have decided to replace the 20% United States Reimbursement Fee with Trade and Investment Deals that the various Gulf States will be making into the US," Trump said.

US attacks Iran; Tehran retaliates across M-E

■ By Jon Gambrell
DUBAI, July 14 (AP)

THE US launched strikes on Iran early Tuesday, hours after President Donald Trump vowed to reinstate an American blockade of Iranian ports and charge ships for safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran responded with attacks on Middle East allies of the US.

The actions leave in tatters an interim deal meant to pause the fighting, reopen a waterway that is a crucial passage for the world's energy supplies, and give negotiators time to hammer out a permanent end to the war. Instead, fighting has once again engulfed the region and threatened the global economy. Unless a diplo-

matic solution is found quickly, it could intensify into all-out war.

The focus of the conflict now is the strait, through which a fifth of all traded crude oil and natural gas passed in peacetime. Iran effectively shut the passage during the war by attacking and

threatening ships -- a tactic that proved its greatest strategic advantage since it sent the price of oil, fertiliser and other goods soaring at a time when world leaders were already struggling

to address a rising cost of living. The interim deal was supposed to reopen the waterway, but Iran

has attacked some ships moving through the strait.

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Trump indicates that another Iranian nuclear facility could be targetted soon, saying the site known as Pickaxe Mountain remains under close surveillance and is 'on the list' for possible strikes

'Struck Patriot radar system, US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, airbase in Jordan'

TEHRAN, July 14 (IANS)

THE Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) on Tuesday struck several facilities of the US military, including a Patriot radar system and the headquarters of the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain and American targets in Jordan, local media reported.

According to the latest statements by the IRGC on Tuesday, its Navy struck several weapons support depots, a satellite communications centre, accommodation used by US troops, and several military radar systems in Bahrain, Press TV reported.

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1 Indian killed, 10 injured in Iranian attacks on 2 ships in Hormuz

NEW DELHI, July 14 (PTI)

AN INDIAN national was killed and 10 others were injured in Iranian attacks on two oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, prompting New Delhi to summon the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) of the Embassy of Iran in New Delhi and lodge a strong protest over the strikes. The attacks on the two Emirati oil tankers came amid escalating hostilities between the US and Iran. New Delhi strongly condemned the attacks on commercial vessels MT Al Bahiyah and MT Mombasa with a total of 30 Indian seafarers on board.

New Delhi summons Iranian DCM

India launches UNSC campaign

India to prioritise rule-based maritime order: Jaishankar

■ By Yoshita Singh

UNITED NATIONS, July 14 (PTI)

INDIA will ensure that issues such as free, open and rule-based maritime order, including safety of seafarers, and countering terror financing get the "attention they deserve" at the UN Security Council, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

Jaishankar made these remarks as he launched India's official campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) for 2028-29 on Monday at an event at the world body's headquarters, attended by UN ambassadors, diplomats and officials.

India has been a non-permanent member of the UNSC eight times so far. The last time it held the seat was in 2021-22.

The Minister's comments



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, in New York on Tuesday.
(@DrSJaishankar X/ANI Photo)

come at a time when several Indian seafarers have been killed in strikes and many res-

cued, as commercial vessels came under attack amid escalating tensions in West Asia.

India supports UN membership for Palestine: MEA

NEW DELHI, July 14 (PTI)

INDIA has backed Palestine's bid for United Nations membership and reaffirmed its support for a two-state solution to the festering conflict between the Palestinian people and Israel.

New Delhi's position on Palestine was apprised by Sripriya Ranganathan, a Secretary at the External Affairs Ministry during a ministerial meeting of the Palestine Donor Group, held in Brussels on Monday.

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