

US, Iran offer conflicting claims about peace talks



Smoke rises from a cargo ship after it was hit by a projectile off the coast of Oman in the Strait of Hormuz on Monday night. (AP)

CAIRO, Aug 4 (AP)

A BRITISH maritime monitoring agency said a cargo ship reported being hit by a projectile overnight off the coast of Oman in the Strait of Hormuz, while the United States and Iran made opposing claims about whether they were holding talks.

The cargo ship reported being "hit by an unknown projectile" at 2 am local time while it was 37 kilometres (23 miles) north-east of Al Khasab in Oman, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Centre said.

The UKMTO did not provide further information on the ship, including what flag the vessel was sailing under or whether it was carrying cargo. The town of Al Khasab sits on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula that juts into the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial waterway at the mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas passed before the war.

The strait has been effectively shut by Iran's attacks on shipping since the start of the war in February, while the US also has imposed a blockade on Iranian ports in the waterway.

Trump said on Monday that talks with Iran had resumed, a

day after saying he called for massive strikes he had threatened to unleash on the country. Trump said he pulled back at the urging of Gulf allies Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Whether "Iran wants to admit it or not, we are, in fact, talking," Trump maintained.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said on Monday that no negotiations were being held with the US, adding that Tehran's talks were only with Oman and focused on establishing a route for safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump voiced frustration with Iran, suggesting Tehran had asked for the talks, which are critical to ending the months-long conflict and reviving stalled cargo traffic through the strait.

"Iranian Leadership is unbelievably duplicitous!" the US President vented on Truth Social, his social media platform.

"They ask for a meeting, some would say beg, talks begin, with more scheduled in the immediate future, and they say, openly and proudly, that they're not having any discussions, that nothing is being talked about, and they're only dealing with Oman," he wrote.

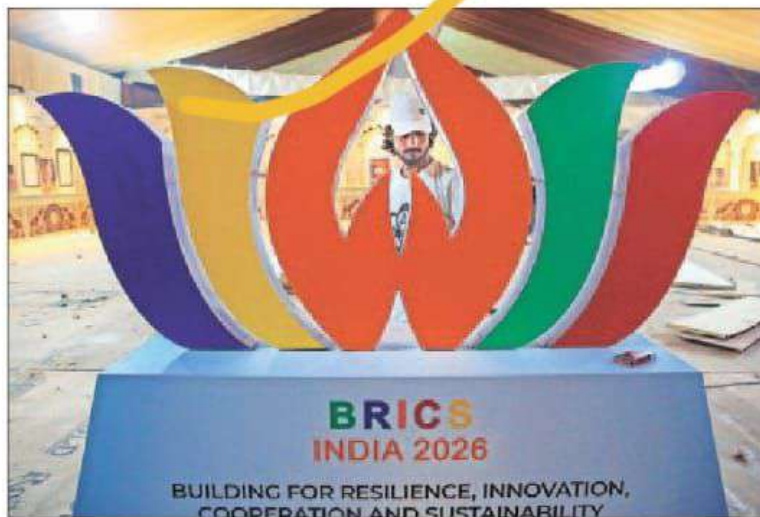
India calls for stronger cooperation to trace fugitive offenders at BRICS anti-graft meet

HYDERABAD, Aug 4 (PTI)

INDIA on Tuesday called for stronger cooperation to trace fugitive offenders, support extradition, recover stolen assets and close loopholes enabling the cross-border movement of offenders and illicit funds.

Addressing the inaugural session of the two-day BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) meeting here, Rachna Shah, Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), Government of India, said that corruption remains a major obstacle to sustainable and inclusive development.

She said that corruption diverts scarce public resources away from hospitals, schools and critical infrastructure, and undermines public trust.



Underlining that no country is immune to the challenge of corruption and that no nation can overcome it alone, Shah called for collective, coordinated and sustained international cooper-

ation to prevent illicit financial flows, safeguard public resources and strengthen the international anti-corruption architecture, according to a statement issued by the Personnel Ministry.

She said that BRICS must translate its shared mandate on tackling cross-border corruption into practical cooperation and tangible outcomes.

Highlighting the challenge posed by fugitive economic offenders, Secretary Shah stressed the need to ensure that no jurisdiction becomes a sanctuary for those who profit from crime. She called for stronger cooperation to trace fugitive offenders, support extradition, recover stolen assets and close loopholes enabling the cross-border movement of offenders and illicit funds.

Shah welcomed the progress made on the BRICS repository on informal cooperation for tracing fugitive offenders sought for corruption and supporting extradition.

Indian economy to hit USD 5 trillion mark in FY29 as per IMF: FM Nirmala

NEW DELHI, Aug 4 (PTI)

INDIAN economy is set to cross USD 5-trillion mark in FY29 as per the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Government has adopted a broad-based growth strategy to achieve the milestone, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

As per the World Economic Outlook database (April 2026) published by the IMF, India's GDP at current prices is projected to be around USD 5.1 trillion by 2028-29, she said in a written reply.

"The Government has adopted a broad-based growth strategy focusing on enhancing agricultural productivity, promoting manufactur-



ing, supporting MSMEs, expanding infrastructure, improving logistics and ease of doing business, creating an efficient and streamlined tax system through income tax and GST reforms, fostering innovation and digitalisation, strengthening human capital, and ensuring energy security," she said.

The strategy is complemented by sustained emphasis on public capital expenditure, liberalising the FDI

regime, boosting exports, and strengthening macroeconomic fundamentals through prudent fiscal management and price stability.

To develop the manufacturing sector, she said, initiatives such as Production Linked Incentives scheme, Make in India, National Logistics Policy, National Single Window System and PM GatiShakti, scheme are aimed at enhancing domestic production, attracting investment, generating employment and improving competitiveness.

These efforts are complemented by targeted measures to strengthen the MSME sector, including enhancement of guarantees and the Emergency Credit Guarantee Scheme, revision of MSME classi-

fication norms strengthening the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) ecosystem, simplified Udyam Registration, wider access to Government e-Marketplace (GeM), and support under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, she said.

The services sector is being strengthened through the development and deployment of Digital Public Infrastructure, promotion of Global Capability Centres (GCCs), Medical Value Travel and the Orange Economy, strengthening the artificial intelligence and digital ecosystem, and targeted initiatives for skill development and enhancing workforce employability, she said. The Union Budget 2026-27 has announced a number of initiatives to unlock the growth potential of the services sector.

India rejects local body elections in PoK

NEW DELHI, Aug 4 (PTI)

INDIA on Tuesday described the so-called local body elections in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) a "complete farce," asserting that such "hollow" exercises cannot hide the ground reality in the region.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) strongly criticised Pakistan's crackdown on protesters in PoK and said the international community should see through the "flimsy veneer" of Islamabad's "hypocritical lecturing" on human rights.

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

"This so-called local election in PoK is a complete farce. The real happening is that of public protests and wanton killings by Pakistani forces. Such hollow exercises cannot hide reality," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a regular media briefing.

"Since June this year, at least 90 civilians have lost their lives

in the continuing crackdown," he said.

Jaiswal said the Pakistani establishment has "answered public discontent with bullets, black outs, intimidation and repression, and now seeks to manufacture legitimacy through a hollow electoral exercise".

"It must be held accountable, and the world should see through the flimsy veneer of Pakistan's hypocritical lecturing on human rights," he said.

Jaiswal was responding to a question on elections in PoK.

India invites Desh PM Rahman to attend BRICS summit

NEW DELHI, Aug 4 (PTI)

INDIA on Tuesday said it has extended an invitation to Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to attend the outreach session of the upcoming BRICS summit in his capacity as the current chair of the BIMSTEC grouping.

India is hosting the annual BRICS summit in New Delhi on September 12 and 13, which is expected to deliberate extensively on a number of pressing global challenges, including the economic consequences of the West Asia crisis.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that an invitation was extended to Rahman to undertake a bilateral visit to India after he assumed the charge of the top office in February. "As far as the BRICS summit is concerned, India has separately extended an invitation to the Bangladesh Prime Minister in his capacity as the current chair of BIMSTEC to attend the outreach session of the 18th BRICS Summit," Jaiswal said.

SC issues directions against cyber scams

Asks RBI to circulate SOP on mule accounts

NEW DELHI, Aug 4 (PTI)

OBSERVING that mechanisms to tackle cyber crimes needed "wider adoption, faster implementation and continued follow-up", the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Reserve Bank of India to prepare and circulate a standard operating procedure (SOP) in four weeks to deal with bank accounts linked to cyber frauds, including mule accounts.

Issuing a slew of nationwide directions aimed at strengthening the response to cyber-enabled financial frauds, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana directed all states, Union Territories (UTs) and law enforcement agencies to ensure the expeditious adoption and operationalisation of the grievance redressal and money restoration

modules developed for victims of such frauds.

The bench was hearing a suo motu matter, "In Re: Victims of Digital Arrest Related to Forged Documents".

After perusing the consolidated status reports and hearing Attorney General R Venkataramani on behalf of the Government, the bench said, "While the progress reported at this stage is appreciable, the mechanisms already put in place require wider adoption, faster implementation, and continued follow-up."

The bench issued interim directions and said, "The Reserve Bank of India shall, within four weeks, prepare and circulate an SOP for dealing with mule accounts/accounts linked to money laundering activity and cyber-enabled fraud. A copy of

the final SOP shall be furnished to the Registrar General of all High Courts."

It also asked the States, Union Territories (UTs) and law enforcement agencies to ensure "expeditious adoption and operationalisation" of the grievance modules namely, "the Grievance Redressal Module, and the Money Restoration Module" under the Ministry of Home Affairs' SOP concerning the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP).

"They shall also take appropriate steps to ensure public awareness of these two modules," it said. It asked the Registrar General of High Courts to apprise all courts and other adjudicating authorities of the grievance redressal mechanism to enable them to deal with freezing of bank accounts involved in cyber

frauds. "An aggrieved person may ordinarily be encouraged to avail of the said mechanism in the first instance. However, doing so shall not operate as a bar to the exercise of any constitutional, statutory or other legal remedies available in law," it said.

It asked the authorities to provide in their next status reports the "state-wise and bank-wise data" of grievances registered and disposed besides the summary of restoration orders issued and the amounts restored with the victims.

On the issue of State Cyber Crime Coordination Centres and registration of e-Zero FIRs, the bench noted that so far only 18 States have established such centres and asked the remaining States to "notify and operationalise" such centres within four weeks.