

India, SA to expand cooperation in critical minerals, pharmaceuticals: Goyal

NEW DELHI, Aug 6 (IANS)

INDIA and South Africa discussed ways to expand cooperation in critical minerals, pharmaceuticals and manufacturing on the sidelines of the 'BRICS 2026 Trade Ministers' Meeting', Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday.

As India aims to secure resilient supply chains for critical minerals, Goyal met Parks Tau, Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition of South Africa, on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting in Jaipur.

The two nations discussed advancing the India-Southern African Customs Union (SACU) Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) at the meeting.

"We discussed the signing of Terms of Reference (ToRs) for India-SACU PTA and early con-



clusion of negotiations, strengthening the India-South Africa trade engagement and explored opportunities for cooperation in the critical minerals, pharmaceuticals and manufacturing sectors," the minister posted on social media platform X.

India hosted the meeting in Jaipur under the BRICS India 2026 Presidency. The meeting brought together BRICS nations to

strengthen trade and economic cooperation, foster innovation, build resilient value chains, and promote sustainable industrial growth.

Goyal said that the two countries explored ways to conclude negotiations at the earliest, with a view to strengthening India-South Africa trade engagement. The discussions assume significance as India looks to secure

resilient supply chains for critical minerals needed for clean energy technologies, advanced manufacturing and strategic industries.

Meanwhile, trade between India and Africa rose from \$7 billion in 2001 to more than \$98 billion in 2023, while cumulative Indian investment on the continent now exceeds \$75 billion, concentrated in telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure and agriculture, according to figures compiled by the India Africa Entrepreneurship Forum (IAEF).

According to the IAEF, India and Africa together represent a combined economic potential close to \$7 trillion, with growing opportunities in healthcare, artificial intelligence, fintech, climate technologies, manufacturing, logistics and digital infrastructure.

India test-fires Agni-4 missile

NEW DELHI, Aug 6 (PTD)

INDIA on Thursday successfully test-fired ballistic missile Agni-4 from the integrated test range in Odisha's Chandipur.

The test-firing of the missile was carried out by the Strategic Forces Command.

"Medium Range Ballistic Missile 'Agni-4' was successfully test-fired from the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur in Odisha on August 6," the Defence Ministry said.

"The launch validated all operational and technical parameters. The test was carried out under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command," it said. The Agni missiles are long-range, nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missiles.

The missile had achieved all mission objectives, validating critical technologies and



demonstrating India's growing long-range precision strike capability.



CAIRO, Aug 6 (AP)

IRAN said on Wednesday it is in the “final stage” of drafting an agreement with Oman over the Strait of Hormuz, and US President Donald Trump has said a deal could be announced this week. That could potentially reopen the critical waterway, ease pressure on the world economy and help bring an end to the war.

But the agreement is likely to be contingent on the US lifting its blockade on Iran’s ports. The

‘Hormuz deal is close’

Trump administration has previously ruled out any deal that would cement Iran’s grip over the strait, which would amount to a major loss for the US and a break with global norms. Iran has insisted on some measure of control over the strait, saying it will not go back to being an open international waterway, as it was before the war.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, said the agreement with Oman is in the “final stage” of drafting, and that a joint statement will be issued “if certain parties do not obstruct this process”, apparently referring to the US. Iranian and Omani negotiators have finalised the draft deal to reopen the strait and await final approval from Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba

Khamenei, two regional officials told The Associated Press on Wednesday. Khamenei is believed to have been wounded in the war’s opening strikes and has not been seen in public since then.

The officials, who were briefed on the negotiations, portrayed the potential deal as a temporary solution to the dispute over the strait. They said it is tied to an agreement reached between the US and Iran in June that aimed at ending the fighting and reopening the waterway but ultimately collapsed. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks, said the potential deal will pave the way for the US and Iran to resume negotiations on Tehran’s nuclear programme.

India, US special forces hold joint drill

NEW DELHI, Aug 6 (PTI)

SPECIAL Forces of India and the US are undertaking a joint exercise in the country to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation, officials said on Thursday.

Commandos from India's National Security Guard (NSG) and the United States Special Operations Forces (US SOF) are taking part in the eighth edition of the bilateral exercise -- Tarkash -- being held from July 13 to August 7.

"Throughout the exercise, personnel from both forces demonstrated exceptional professionalism, adaptability and commitment to excellence," the NSG said in a social media post.

"The successful completion of EX Tarkash VIII reflects the shared commitment of the National Security Guard and the United States Special Operations Forces to enhancing operational readiness and maintaining the highest standards of professionalism," it said.

2 soldiers killed in Lebanon in first Israeli deaths since June truce with Hezbollah

BEIRUT, Aug 6 (AP)

THE Israeli military said Thursday that two of its soldiers were killed in combat in southern Lebanon in the first Israeli deaths since the implementation of a shaky truce between Israel and the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah in June.

Four other soldiers were wounded, the military said. The deaths had been reported by Israeli media a day earlier.

The Israeli army launched strikes on Wednesday in southern Lebanon in response to what it described as Hezbollah's violation of the ceasefire and issued a call for residents of the village

of Mansouri to flee - the first such warning Israel has issued in Lebanon for weeks.

There was no immediate statement from Hezbollah.

The escalation came as Lebanese and Israeli negotiators met in Rome to discuss implementation of a June 26 deal under which Israeli forces are supposed to withdraw from areas they occupy in southern Lebanon and allow the Lebanese army to take control, in exchange for Hezbollah's disarmament.

The latest Israel-Hezbollah war erupted on March 2, when Hezbollah fired rockets across the border two days after the US and Israel launched their attacks on Iran.



**Israeli PM
Benjamin
Netanyahu**

NEW DELHI, Aug 6 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday received a telephone call from his Israeli coun-

Netanyahu dials PM Modi

terpart Benjamin Netanyahu and they exchanged views on the recent developments in West Asia. The two leaders also reviewed sustained progress in India-Israel Special Strategic Partnership and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the bilateral cooperation across various sectors for the mutual benefit of the two countries, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said.

"PM Netanyahu and PM Modi exchanged views on the recent developments in West Asia. The



PM Narendra Modi

two leaders agreed to remain in touch," the statement said.

The conflict in West Asia is continuing for over five months now without any permanent solution.



Lok Sabha passes Taxation Bill

Bill to promote domestic electronic manufacturing

NEW DELHI, Aug 6 (PTI)

THE Lok Sabha on Thursday passed the Taxation and other Laws (Amendment) bill without a debate due to persistent sloganeering by the Opposition over various issues, including alleged theft of donation at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

After the passage of the bill, through which the Government also amended the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, the House was adjourned for the day.

Through the bill the Government seeks to attract more foreign capital, promote domestic electronics manufacturing and make it easier for foreign cloud companies to use Indian data centres by providing "process certainty". At present, banks and payment-system providers cannot directly or indirectly charge users for payment made through UPI and RuPay debit cards. The bill proposes

LS passes bill to allow charges on UPI payments

NEW DELHI, Aug 6 (PTI)

LOK Sabha on Thursday passed a bill to amend the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 that authorises the Government to permit banks and other service providers to levy charges on payments through unified payments interface (UPI) and other notified electronic payment modes.

The amendment passed by the House without discussion amid din seeks to remove the existing legal provision that prevents banks and payment service providers from charging Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) on notified electronic payment modes.

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allowing the Central Government to decide, through notification, which electronic payment modes or transactions must remain free. The Taxation and other Laws (Amendment) bill, 2026, replaces the June 5 ordinance that provided I-T exemption to income from interest income and capital gains made by FPIs from investments in G-Secs. The bill proposes to make it easier for fund managers to relocate to India but cutting down on the list of conditions that these funds will have to satisfy to ensure that their global income does not get taxed in India.

To encourage domestic manufacturing by giving policy certainty, the bill extends till 2040-41 the income tax exemption currently available to foreign companies that engage a contract manufacturer in India for producing electronics goods here.

Specified electronic items mentioned in

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