

# 'India willing to help end Russia-Ukraine conflict'

KYIV, Sept 3 (PTI)

**INDIA** on Thursday said, it was ready to extend "any help in any manner" to end the Ukraine-Russia war, which is now in its fifth year, as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held wide-ranging talks with his Ukrainian counterpart Andrii Sybiha in Kyiv. "India has consistently maintained that this is not an era of war, and that solutions will not emerge from the battlefield," Jaishankar said in a joint press statement alongside Sybiha after their talks.

**'Ukraine welcomes PM Modi's call to move from endless war towards end to war'**

Report on Last page

He recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi just two days ago declared that endless war must now give way to the end of war during a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Bishkek on the margins of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in Kyiv on Thursday. (ANI)

"Every passing day of conflict only means more deaths and more destruction. Understandably, it is for the parties involved to find a way. But, if India can be of any help in any manner, we are ready," Jaishankar said.

*(Contd on page 5)*

# 'Raksha' - India's 10-year strategic blueprint

- Defence diplomacy is a core pillar of India's foreign policy
- Key pillars highlighted in the strategic blueprint for next decade include, strategic partnerships, capacity building, indigenous exports.

NEW DELHI, Sept 3 (PTI)

**DEFENCE** Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday released 'Raksha' - a strategic blueprint on defence diplomacy which carries a "comprehensive frame-

work" outlining India's strategic roadmap and vision for global partnerships over the next decade.

"As defence diplomacy is a core pillar of India's foreign policy, this document provides a

clear, actionable vision for the next decade, ensuring that India remains an anchor of peace, stability, and rule-based order in an evolving global landscape," the Defence Ministry said.

The document marks a shift in India's strategic engagement, aligning national security objectives with proactive global cooperation, fostering long-term stability and mutual growth, it said.

Singh released the 'Raksha' document on defence diplomacy in New Delhi.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the release of India's 'RAKSHA' document on defence diplomacy.

(PTI)

"This comprehensive framework outlines India's strategic roadmap and vision for global defence partnerships over the next 10 years," it said in a statement. Key pillars highlighted in the strategic blueprint include, strategic partnerships, capacity building, indigenous exports and maritime security.

Under the pillar 'strategic partnerships', the vision seeks to deepen bilateral and multilateral security cooperation.

(Contd on page 5)



# Don't share sensitive tech with Pak: Rajnath to Belgium

Brussels, Delhi Widen Def Partnership, Eye Joint Weapon Production

Surendra.Singh@timesofindia.com

**New Delhi:** Defence minister Rajnath Singh Thursday made it clear to visiting Belgian defence minister and trade minister Theo Francken that for Indo-Belgian defence relations to flourish, his country should not have any defence pact on sensitive technology with Pakistan. The Belgian minister agreed to India's request.

"In response to Rajnath Singh asking Belgian defence minister to keep India's sensitivity in mind regarding transfer of sensitive technology to Pakistan during their meeting on Thursday morning, the Belgian minister responded that they are clear in their mind and they have chosen India without any doubt in mind," a defence source told TOI.

Francken also made it clear "till the time he is the defence minister of Belgium, there is no question of any cooperation with Pakistan".

The source told TOI that the Belgian minister's reply is "similar to response from Italian defence minister (Guido Crosetto when he met Rajnath



Defence minister Rajnath Singh also discussed cooperation in critical minerals processing and recycling with his Belgium counterpart, Theo Francken

on April 30) and this shows that European countries have chosen India (over Pakistan), vindicating India's stance".

After the meeting, Rajnath said on X, "We reviewed the entire spectrum of defence relations and defence industrial cooperation between India and Belgium. Multiple MoUs and contracts under the defence industrial cooperation were also signed, towards leveraging Belgian technology together with Indian skill and scale." **India and Belgium inked a defence framework pact and separately, 10 pacts on collabo-**

**ration between Belgian and Indian defence industries were signed, involving production of Belgian military hardware such as rockets in India.**

The Belgian side said that "there are opportunities (to have cooperation with India) in weapon systems, ammunition, radar, electro-optical sensors, command and control, and counter-drone systems. These are precisely areas in which Belgian industry has particularly strong expertise." "With this visit, we are reaping the benefits of what we have built over the past year. Every

project that connects our technology with India's growing defence industry strengthens both our security and economic position," Francken said.

In a separate meeting with MoS defence Sanjay Seth, Francken emphasised the potential for deeper industrial collaboration between the two sides to strengthen the defence forces through collective efforts. Seth urged Belgian defence manufacturers to leverage their technological expertise alongside India's manufacturing scale for co-development and co-production of niche products for shared security and prosperity.

During the Belgian PM's visit, global defence major Thales and Kalyani Strategic Systems Ltd, a subsidiary of Bharat Forge, have signed a "strategic alliance agreement" to explore collaboration on both unguided and laser-guided variants of Thales' combat-proven 70-mm rocket systems to help enhance operational readiness of the Indian armed forces.

Thales Belgium is a 100% subsidiary of Thales Group.



# New mechanism to fast-track investment between 2 nations

## DEFENCE, DEALS & DIPLOMACY

Photo: Rajesh Mehta

➤ Letter of Intent on Defence Cooperation to boost indigenous manufacturing, co-design and co-development

➤ Another defence MoU to allow Indian companies to access Belgian tech and expertise

➤ Appointment of a resident Defence Attache at the Embassy of India in Brussels

➤ MoU for Cooperation in the Field of Renewable Energy



Belgium PM Bart De Wever with PM Modi in New Delhi Thursday

➤ MoU on Diplomatic Training

➤ Establishment of an Investment Fast-Track Mechanism between India and Belgium

➤ Doubling of Bilateral Trade in the next five years

➤ Institutionalisation of the India-Belgium Business Forum

➤ MoU for Cooperation in Combating Transnational Organized Crime, Cybercrime and related matters

➤ Establishment of a Consular Dialogue between India and Belgium

### ▶ Continued from P 1

**P**M Narendra Modi announced a mechanism to fast-track investment between the two countries.

Belgium accounted for \$4.2bn of FDI inflows from April 2000 to Dec 2025, making it the 18th-largest source of FDI into India. De Wever's visit resulted in 10 major outcomes — five MoUs, including two to boost indigenous defence manufacturing, co-design and co-development, and another five announcements, including appointment of a defence attache in Indian embassy in Brussels.

Asked whether there was any discussion on pending extradition of fugitive Mehul Choksi, who remains in a Belgium jail, MEA secretary Sibi George said law enforcement cooperation was an "important topic of discussion and an important aspect of the relationship with Belgium".

"All issues of concern and interest are discussed at all levels of our engagement... India remains committed to ensuring that fugitives are brought back to the country to face the law," he added.

Modi said ties with Belgium had expanded beyond traditional sectors. "Defence and security cooperation is a key pillar of our relationship. Today, we agreed to enhance military exchanges and training

cooperation between the two countries," said the PM. "The agreements between our govts and defence industries will open up opportunities for defence co-development and co-production. We will also further strengthen intelligence sharing and cooperation between our agencies to combat crime," he added.

PM said unprecedented cooperation, including the recently concluded FTA be-

**“Defence & security cooperation is a key pillar of our relationship... The agreements between our govts and defence industries will open up new opportunities for defence co-development and co-production**

**PM NARENDRA MODI**

tween India and EU — two of the world's largest democratic blocs — would give a boost to global stability, development and shared prosperity.

The leaders also discussed Ukraine and West Asia, underlining their support for the rule of law, dialogue and diplomacy. In a joint statement, they stressed the importance of ensuring the safety and security of maritime routes and maintaining safe and unimpeded maritime shipping.

"Whether it is Ukraine or West Asia, we support all efforts aimed at an early end to conflicts and the restoration of peace," the PM added.

The leaders called for closer partnerships in semiconductor technologies to create resilient and advanced technology ecosystems in both countries, with Modi saying that Belgium's expertise in semiconductors and India's scale complement each other.

The two leaders agreed to soon conclude a migration and mobility agreement to facilitate talent mobility.

Belgium also expressed solidarity with India in the fight against terrorism. De Wever condemned the attack on civilians at Pahalgam in April 2025. "Both leaders underscored their commitment to a comprehensive/global approach to counterterrorism and affirmed that terrorism, in any form and manifestation and anywhere, could never be justified and called for its perpetrators to be held accountable in accordance with the law," said the statement.

The leaders also focused on clean energy, critical minerals and reliable supply chains. "The MoU on Renewable Energy signed today will give momentum to our sustainability cooperation. In critical minerals, we have decided to enhance ties in processing & recycling," PM said.



# US draws a red line on Modi's Iran meet

## Don't Think Tehran And Delhi Have A Trade Deal: Rubio

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: US secretary of state Marco Rubio has sought to draw a red line between India's right to conduct its own diplomacy and Washington's determination to prevent Iran from rebuilding the economic lifelines strangled by US sanctions. "I don't think there's a trade deal between India and Iran," Rubio said on Wednesday, after PM Narendra Modi's meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, drew scrutiny in Washington DC.

But Rubio followed that reassurance with a warning that was plainly less accommodating: countries should not help Tehran develop mechanisms to generate revenue that could finance terrorism or its nuclear programme, and those that do could themselves be subjected to US sanctions.

The timing of Rubio's warning, coming on the heels of Modi's meeting with Pezeshkian, made the message to New Delhi — which prides itself on its independent foreign policy — difficult to miss. The two leaders discussed expanding and diversifying bilateral trade, the wars and instability in West Asia, and the need to protect freedom of navigation and commercial shipping after attacks in the region killed Indian seafarers. India described the meeting as "fruitful" but no formal trade agreement was announced. Pezeshkian, for his part, is reported to have asked Modi to use India's extensive diplomatic contacts to encourage dialogue and help end the conflict. For New Delhi, Iran is not



Rubio also warned that countries should not help Tehran generate revenue and those that do could be subjected to US sanctions

### Toppling Iran's Islamic republic within reach: Bibi

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu Thursday voiced confidence that Iran's Islamic republic could soon fall, saying it was weaker than ever as the US resumed attacks. "This regime is currently teetering. It is weaker than ever. It is fighting for its survival," Netanyahu said at an event with Israeli military leaders. "I am convinced that we can remove this threat once and for all — that is, to overthrow this regime. That is the central task that still lies ahead of us, but it is close. It is not impossible. It is within reach," he said. Iran, meanwhile, fired at Kuwait Thursday as part of its retaliation for US bombardments this week. Sirens sounded in Kuwait early Thursday, where air defences intercepted missiles and drones during a "blatant Iranian aggression," the defence ministry said on X. AGENCIES

simply another diplomatic relationship; it is a strategic geographic bridge. Iran's Chabahar port gives India a route into Afghanistan and Central Asia that bypasses Pakistan, while the International

North-South Transport Corridor offers a potential land-and-sea connection from India through Iran to Russia and wider Eurasia. Iran has also traditionally been an important source of energy for India.

The Bishkek summit also gave Iran a larger diplomatic stage at a particularly vulnerable moment for Tehran. Pezeshkian met Russian President Vladimir Putin, thanking Moscow for its support and calling for closer cooperation against what he described as US "unilateralism". Pezeshkian also met Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif.

The SCO meeting itself provided Tehran with diplomatic company at a critical time. Its members condemned the military strikes on Iran and rejected unilateral coercive measures, while reaffirming Iran's right to peaceful nuclear activity. The organisation also called for greater cooperation in energy, trade and finance. "This is a big deal, particularly since India — an ally of both the US and Israel — also signed it," noted Trita Parsi, a foreign policy analyst with the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

India now sits at an extraordinary number of geopolitical tables: the US-led Quad with Japan and Australia; the Brics grouping, which it chairs this year; the SCO alongside China, Russia and Iran; and the G20, which will meet in Florida later this year; besides other regional and Global South forums. To Washington, this is simultaneously an asset and an irritation. India is an increasingly important US partner in balancing China — but New Delhi refuses to become an American ally in the traditional sense.



# Thales, Bharat Forge subsidiary sign pact for 70-mm rocket systems

NEW DELHI, Sept 3 (PTI)

GLOBAL defence major Thales and a subsidiary of Bharat Forge have signed a "Strategic Alliance Agreement" to explore collaboration on both unguided and laser-guided variants of Thales' combat-proven 70-mm rocket systems to help enhance the operational readiness of the Indian armed forces, officials said on Thursday.

The 70-mm rocket systems of Thales are already in use by the Indian Armed Forces, they said.

The European firm announced the partnership on Thursday amid the ongoing official visit of Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever to India.

"As part of this collaboration, Thales will leverage its long-standing partnership with India and contribute its global expertise in 2.75-inch/70-mm rockets and launchers developed in Belgium, while KSSL will utilise its local manufacturing and testing facilities to support production and integration of components from Thales' qualified supply chain, ensuring international quality standards," the firm said in a statement.



The 70-mm rocket systems of Thales are already in use by the Indian Army

Thales and Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited (KSSL), the wholly-owned defence subsidiary of Bharat Forge Limited, signed a "Strategic Alliance Agreement" to explore collaboration on both the unguided and laser-guided variants of Thales' 70-mm rocket systems, which are already in use by the Indian Armed Forces," it said.

The partnership marks a significant step in strengthening India-Belgium defence cooperation while advancing India's ambition to become a globally competitive defence manufac-

turing hub, the Paris-based firm said. By combining Thales' advanced rocket technologies and global market reach with KSSL's established expertise in defence manufacturing, system integration and industrialisation, the companies will create an "indigenous capability" to address domestic requirements and support international opportunities, the statement said.

Thales Belgium is a 100 per cent subsidiary of the company Thales Group. It combines a strong local industrial footprint with leading expertise in defence, cybersecurity, aerospace and advanced technologies. It is a European leader in 70mm rocket systems, offering standard and laser-guided solutions and developing cost-effective counter-UAS capabilities, designed to defeat drones and drone swarms, the statement said.

The global company has a presence in India since 1953. In the new era of asymmetric warfare, advanced variants of Thales' 70 mm rockets are increasingly well suited to counter-drone missions, delivering reliable and scalable effectiveness against evolving aerial threats, the firm said.



# REAL STORY OF 7.8% GDP

By PROF. (DR) MANOJ DAYAL

**I**N a world economy battered by wars, oil shocks and other effects, India has just delivered a number that has stunned economists and silenced sceptics: 7.8 per cent.

According to the latest data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India's real GDP grew 7.8 per cent in the January-March quarter of FY 2025-26 and also in the April-June quarter of FY 2026-27, comfortably beating the Reuters poll estimate of 7.1 per cent and RBI's projection of 7 per cent. For the full financial year 2025-26, growth accelerated to 7.7 per cent from 7.1 per cent in FY25.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed it a "herculean feat", noting that the collective strength of 140 crore Indians ensured such growth despite oil price shocks and supply chain issues. Why is this 7.8% unprecedented? Because it came when it was least expected.

## 1. Growth Against All Odds:

The quarter that delivered 7.8% was not a normal quarter. It was the quarter when the war in West Asia intensified, Brent crude spiked, and global supply chains were disrupted. The Government itself noted that the January-March period accounted for disruptions caused by the conflict in the Middle East. Most global agencies had downgraded India's growth. RBI cut its FY27 forecast to 6.6 per cent citing elevated energy prices. Yet India grew faster. This is resilience, not just recovery.

The growth was not driven by one-off Government spending. Data shows Gross Value Added, GVA, which strips out indirect taxes and subsidies to show true production momentum, grew 7.9 per cent in Q4 and 8.2 per cent in Q1 FY27, outpacing GDP growth itself. As Deloitte economist Rumki Majumdar noted, when GVA outpaces GDP, it means expansion is backed by strong production, not just demand.

## 2. What Drove the Surge?

**A. Manufacturing Revival:** After years of being called the weak link, manufacturing emerged as the strongest contributor, expanding 10.7 per cent in FY26 compared to 9.3 per cent in FY25. The new GDP series with base year 2022-23, using the double deflation method, has captured manufacturing activity more accurately.

**B. Services:** The Two-Year High:



The services sector was the stand-out performer, expanding 9.3 per cent, its strongest growth in two years. Trade, hotels, transport and communication grew 11 per cent, sharply higher than 6.6 per cent a year ago, while financial, real estate and professional services expanded 10.4 per cent. Government services surged to a 12-quarter high of 9.8 per cent.

**C. Consumption and Investment:** Twin Pillars: From the expenditure side, both Private Final Consumption Expenditure and Gross Fixed Capital Formation recorded growth exceeding 7.5 per cent. GST cuts and income tax reductions boosted personal consumption by 7.1 per cent, while private investment grew nearly 12 per cent from 5.8 per cent a year ago. Credit growth remained healthy at 18.3 per cent, the highest in over a decade.

## 3. What 7.8% Means for India?

For the common citizen: Real GDP at constant prices reached Rs 323.12 lakh crore in FY26, while nominal GDP rose to Rs 346.36 lakh crore. This translates into more jobs, higher commercial vehicle sales which grew 12.6 per cent, and foodgrain production up 5.3 per cent.

For global positioning: India remains the fastest-growing major economy. While global growth hovers around 3 per cent, India's 7.7-7.8 per cent growth is more than double the global average.

For policy credibility: The data validated India's recent statistical reforms. The revised series with improved sectoral representation and better capture of the informal sector has shown that earlier estimates had understated India's strength.

**4. Challenges Ahead:** This is not a moment for complacency. The

same reports that celebrate 7.8 per cent also warn of headwinds. Crisil maintains FY27 growth forecast at 6.6 per cent with risks tilted to the downside due to crude prices, softer global growth and below-normal monsoon forecast.

Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran said India can return to 7 per cent plus growth in FY28 if external conditions improve and policy measures preserve macroeconomic stability.

The task is to convert this cyclical surge into structural momentum through ease of doing business, ease of living, and sustained reforms.

To conclude the real story we can say that the 7.8 per cent growth rate is unprecedented not because India has never grown at this pace before, but because India has grown at this pace despite unprecedented global adversity.

It proves a fundamental shift. India is no longer just a beneficiary of global tailwinds, it is creating its own headwinds. It is a domestic demand-driven, investment-led, services-powered economy with a resurgent manufacturing sector. If India can hold this momentum, 7.8 per cent will not be an outlier. It will be the foundation of Viksit Bharat 2047.

As the PM said, "We shall leave no stone unturned to further Ease of Living, Ease of Doing Business and increase opportunities for our youth." The 7.8 per cent is proof that the stones are indeed being turned. What is even more significant here is the stability and strength of Modi Government.

*(The author is the Vice-Chancellor of Kushabhau Thakre University of Journalism and Mass Communication, Raipur)*

■  
The quarter that delivered 7.8% was not a normal quarter.

It was the quarter when the war in West Asia intensified, Brent crude spiked, and global supply chains were disrupted. The Government itself noted that the January-March period accounted for disruptions caused by the conflict in the Middle East. Most global agencies had downgraded India's growth. RBI cut its FY27 forecast to 6.6 per cent citing elevated energy prices. Yet India grew faster. This is resilience, not just recovery.