

India-New Zealand partnership gets boost with FTA, closer maritime ties

NEW DELHI, Sept 23 (IANS)

THE elevation of India-New Zealand ties to a "Strategic Partnership," following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country in July this year, was quickly followed by the ratification of the free trade agreement (FTA) by New Zealand's Parliament, after which the two countries are moving towards their first bilateral naval exercise as part of the closer maritime cooperation, according to an article published by the Lowy Institute. The FTA paves the way for both countries to expand trade and investment beyond the rel-



atively narrow base that has characterised their economic relationship so far, while maritime cooperation is creating links to strengthen the bilateral defence ties.

The article highlights that New Zealand gives India a stronger

connection to Oceania, extending the geographical reach of India's vision of a free, open, inclusive, and secure Indo-Pacific. This helps India to build an Indo-Pacific presence beyond the Quad through this network of bilateral partnerships. Once fully imple-

mented, the FTA will eliminate or reduce tariffs on about 95 per cent of New Zealand's exports to India, while Indian goods will receive duty-free access to New Zealand. The two countries have also set a target of doubling their bilateral trade to \$4.0 bn by 2030. India provides New Zealand with access to a sizable and expanding market amid the tariff turmoil triggered by the USA's trade policy.

At the same time, New Zealand holds immense potential for India in a number of areas, including advanced research, education, investment, and agriculture and food technology.

We are 'victims of terrorism', says Iran's President at UN

■ By Farnoush Amiri

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 23 (AP)

IRAN'S President said that his people have been "victims of terrorism" by the United States, delivering a rare wartime speech at the UN General Assembly a day after President Donald Trump said he could "annihilate" the Islamic Republic.

In a defiant speech, President Masoud Pezeshkian held up large photos of the late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the more than 150 schoolchildren killed on the first days of the war.

"We have only defended ourselves. We are not terrorists," Pezeshkian said at the General



Masoud Pezeshkian

Assembly. "Our innocent people have been the targets of cowardly attacks and aggressions imposed upon our country. And we defended ourselves with utmost strength. America and Israel attacked us." He added about the United States: "Yes, they did hit

President Masoud Pezeshkian held up large photos of the late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the more than 150 schoolchildren killed on the first days of the war

us, but we did not bend the knee." Toward the end of his speech, Pezeshkian called out Trump by name.

"It must be understood by Mr Trump and those who seek to bully us that we are ready for dialogue and diplomacy and negotiations without accepting the language of force," he said.

He also said one thing that was measurably false: "We did not hit civilian populations." Mariners and migrant workers in the region

have been among the civilians killed in Iran's attacks since the war began.

A busy 24 hours for US-Iran relations: Arriving in New York under heavy security, Pezeshkian -- who, within Iran's political landscape, is considered a moderate politician -- addressed world leaders a day after Trump used the same stage to suggest he may "annihilate" the Islamic Republic if a deal isn't reached soon to end the nearly 7-month war.

Jaishankar shares India's concerns on 'Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act' with Rubio



Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar exchanges a handshake with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio during the UN General Assembly High-Level Week, in New York, US. (PTI)

■ By Yoshita Singh
NEW YORK, Sept 23 (PTI)

INDIA and the US on Wednesday discussed bilateral relations and New Delhi's concerns regarding the Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session.

Jaishankar, who arrived in New York City Sunday, is leading the Indian delegation for the 81st session of the UN General Assembly. "Good to meet @SecRubio of the US #UNHighLevelWeek. Reiterated India's interests and concerns with regard to SRIA (Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act). Also discussed the Gulf and Ukraine situations," Jaishankar posted on X after the meeting.

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Indian, Lankan Navies participate in air ops, drills

■ The 13th edition of SLINEX-26, which kicked off on Sept 17, began with harbour phase, followed by sea phase

VISAKHAPATNAM, Sept 23 (IANS)

NAVIES of India and Sri Lanka carried out seamanship evolutions, air operations, night replenishment at sea, and special forces drills during the sea phase of the bilateral maritime exercise SLINEX-26 off Visakhapatnam.

The 13th edition of SLINEX-26, which kicked off on September 17, began with the harbour phase and was followed by the sea phase.

"SLINEX26 transitioned to sea, with the Indian Navy and Sri Lanka Navy undertaking seamanship evolutions, air operations, night replenishment at sea and Special Forces drills, including VBSS and slithering operations", the Indian Navy said in a post on X.

"The evolutions enhanced interoperability and operational coordination, culminating in the conclusion of SLINEX26 and furthering the enduring India-Sri Lanka maritime partner-



A vessel is seen as Indian Navy and Sri Lanka Navy personnel participate in a joint maritime exercise during the 13th edition of SLINEX-26, off the coast of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. (PTI)

ship," it added.

"The harbour phase of SLINEX26 at Visakhapatnam featured professional exchanges, cross-deck visits, UNREP training, Yoga and sporting interactions between the Indian Navy and Sri Lanka Navy," the Indian Navy posted on X on Monday.

"Capt PHSS Appuhamy, CO SLNS Sindurula, also called on RAdm Vishal Bishnoi, FOCEF, EasternSword, furthering professional dialogue and mutual understanding. The engagements enhanced interoperability, camaraderie and exchange of best practices," it added.

ADB raises India's GDP growth forecast to 7%

NEW DELHI, Sept 23 (PTI)

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Wednesday raised its forecast for India's economic growth in the current fiscal to 7 per cent, up from 6.6 per cent projected in July, citing stronger-than-expected economic performance in the first quarter despite supply-side disruptions caused by West Asia crisis.

In its Asian Development Outlook (ADO) September 2026, the multilateral lender said, "The revision reflects India's stronger-than-expected economic performance, with GDP expanding by 7.8 per cent year-on-year in the first quarter of FY2026 (2026-27), supported by robust investment demand, resilient consumption, and solid growth in manufacturing and service sectors."

The economy has also benefited from lower-than-expected supply disruptions, sustained capital inflows, and limited pass-through of higher input cost to consumer prices, which helped cushion the impact of the conflict in the Middle East, the report said. The ADB's latest projection marks an upward revision of 0.4 percentage points from its July forecast of 6.6 pc for FY2027.

EAM talks multilateralism, UNSC reform on margins of General Assembly

■ By Yoshita Singh
NEW YORK, Sept 23 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has held a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings on the margins of the General Assembly, during which he discussed reformed multilateralism, the need for an effective UN Security Council and collaboration in the fields of Artificial Intelligence and space.

Jaishankar participated in the India-UAE-France trilateral on the sidelines of the UNGA session on Tuesday.

"Collaboration in the fields of Artificial Intelligence, Space, health sciences, energy and culture was the main topic of discussion," the Minister said in a post on X.

"Our shared interests and complementary capabilities offer immense scope for cooperation. Agreed to meet again soon to take the discussion forward," he added.

The Foreign Ministers of the

G4 nations of India, Brazil, Germany and Japan also met in New York and "discussed the imperative of reformed multilateralism and a more representative, responsive and effective UN Security Council that reflects today's global realities."

Jaishankar said India will continue to work together with the grouping "to advance this shared objective."

He also held discussions with Nepalese counterpart Shisir Khanal at the premises of India's Permanent Mission to the UN.

"Followed up on bilateral developments since our last meeting in Delhi in June this year, including progress in development partnership and energy cooperation," he said.

Highlighting "another busy day" at UNGA, Jaishankar met with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Republic of the Philippines Ma. Theresa Lazaro, and German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl.



EAM S. Jaishankar during the India-UAE-France trilateral meeting, on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly, in New York.
(@DrSJaisankar/X via PTI)

"We exchanged assessments on the ongoing Ukraine and Gulf crises. As G4 partners, our cooperation at the @UN and other multilateral fora remains robust," he posted on X.

Speaking at the High-Level Meeting of like-minded Global

South Countries and Friends, Jaishankar said that this meeting is taking place at a time of "considerable global uncertainty."

"We can see that in conflicts and geopolitical tensions, in the disruption of supply chains, in

increasing trade barriers, fragmented investment flows, climate shocks, and the fact that international law and rules are under great pressure," Jaishankar said.

"The Global South today may be in the front row of the global crisis, but is in the back row of decision-making," he said as he noted that institutions created for a different era continue to reflect the power structures of that era.

"The Global South needs to be part of decision-making structures that deliberate on issues that directly pertain to our future," he said.

"The reform of the UN and multilateralism as a whole is essential to address the priorities of the Global South," he said.

Jaishankar said that in the past year, the world has seen an increase in the number of active conflicts, which pose a significant risk to the global economy, particularly for the Global South.

India, Australia discuss climate action, energy

NEW DELHI, Sept 23 (IANS)

UNION Minister for Environment Bhupendra Patel met Australian Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen in New Delhi, with discussions focusing on key priorities for the upcoming Pre-COP meeting in Fiji and COP31 in Turkey.

Yadav took to X and posted, "Happy to have met with Mr Chris Bowen, Australia's Minister for Climate Change and Energy and President of the COP31 negotiations, in New Delhi today. We had an engaging discussion on key agenda items for the upcoming Pre-COP in Fiji and COP31 in Turkey."

EU-India FTA could be signed by year-end: German Ambassador

NEW DELHI, Sept 23 (IANS)

THE proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union could be signed by the end of this year, German Ambassador to India Dr Jasper Wiek said on Wednesday, adding that unlocking the pact's economic potential and boosting bilateral trade and investment will be among his key priorities.

Addressing a press conference here, Wiek said the agreement was concluded earlier this year and could be formally signed before year-end.

Iranian advisers helped Houthis seize Yemen's Red Sea coast

■ By **Samy Magdy**

CAIRO, Sept 23 (AP)

IT TOOK Houthi rebels less than 48 hours to seize Yemen's Red Sea coast from pro-Government forces in a resounding blow to US interests and Washington's regional allies.

But the Houthis didn't do it alone. Iranian Revolutionary Guard advisers were in the field helping direct the battle, people familiar with the offensive told

'The Associated Press', marking Iran's most direct intervention in favour of its longtime ally since Yemen's civil war erupted in 2014.

The intervention shows how Iran has built the Houthis into a major regional partner able to open a new front in the wider war with the US.

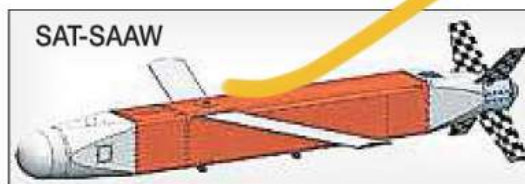
The rebels' biggest land grab in years, along with the closure of a key Saudi pipeline, strengthened their ability to choke off Saudi Arabia's oil exports.

Defence Ministry signs Rs 811 cr contract with BDL

NEW DELHI, Sept 23 (ANI)

THE Ministry of Defence on Wednesday signed an Rs 810.79 crore contract with Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) for the procurement of 160 Satellite Smart Anti Airfield Weapons (SAT-SAAW) and associated equipment for the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The contract, signed in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh in New Delhi, has been placed



under the Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured) category, according to a statement from the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

SAT-SAAW is an air-to-ground precision guided glide bomb which can

be launched from platforms like Jaguar, Hawk and Su-30 MKI and has the capability to neutralise enemy airfields from a long stand-off range. The MoD, in its statement, added that the system, indigenously designed and developed by DRDO, will have an indigenous content of 60 per cent along with indigenous sub-systems like the Initial Measurement Unit, Long Impact Delay Fuse and Twin Store Carrier to further boost Aatmanirbharta in defence.

PM Modi may visit Canada in Dec this year: Canadian PM

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 23 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Canada around December this year, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has said, underlining that Ottawa is making “good progress” in its trade negotiations with India.

Carney made these remarks while responding to a question on when Prime Minister Modi will visit Canada. “We are making good progress in our trade negotiations with India. It is an exceptionally important relationship on many, many levels, people-to-people levels, security levels, and also trade and economic,” Carney said at a press conference on Tuesday on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly high-level session. He said PM Modi and he had committed at the G20 last year to “look to conclude negotiations by the G20 this year”.

Carney said with the G20 Summit slated to be held in December, “I believe that India just confirmed that the Prime Minister will be visiting Canada around that time. The precise date isn’t out, but I very much look forward to hosting him”.