

Blaze at St Petersburg oil sites as Kyiv launches more than 1,000 drones

MOSCOW, Oct 18 (AP)

UKRAINIAN attacks set an oil export terminal ablaze in St. Petersburg on Sunday, as Kyiv launched more than 1,000 drones across Russia in one of its largest ever aerial bombardments.

The attack comes amid deepening tensions between Ukraine and Washington, with U.S. President Donald Trump criticizing Kyiv for its strikes on Russian oil infrastructure.

One person was killed and five more were wounded in the attack, which sparked fires at both the Petersburg Oil Terminal

and the city's Ruchi oil depot, said local Gov. Alexander Beglov. A logistics center belonging to Russian retailer Ozon and a data center for local tech giant VK were also targeted, both companies confirmed.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said Sunday that its forces had destroyed 1,015 Ukrainian drones over 15 Russian regions, as well as the annexed Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea and the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, a woman died and at least two other people were wounded, including a 6-year-old
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'India's 3-part truce plan is 'broadest' for ending Russia-Ukraine war'

NEW DELHI, Oct 18 (IANS)

WHILE US President Donald Trump's efforts focus on building pressure on Russia and Ukraine not to strike each other's oil refineries, India seems to be involved in broader discussions aimed at achieving a more comprehensive cessation of hostilities, according to a report.

The Geopolitical Monitor report highlights that New Delhi has proposed a three-part truce between Russia and Ukraine that would stop attacks on energy facilities and other infrastructure, ensure the continued flow of grain and energy through Black Sea ports, and end attacks on commercial ships.

The proposal, conveyed to Ukrainian officials during External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Kyiv in September, goes beyond separate ceasefire initiatives put forward by Turkey, Egypt, and the United States and seeks to address both infrastructure and maritime security while maintaining vital commodity flows, states the report by Nikola Mikovic.

"We have four proposals. The broadest is India's proposal. We are ready for an energy and Black Sea ceasefire, but only in this combination," the report cited Ukrainian Foreign Minister
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India's Para Asian Games contingent showcases 5,000 years of heritage

NAGOYA (Japan), Oct 18 (PTI)

THE Indian contingent brought a touch of the country's rich heritage to the opening ceremony of the Para Asian Games on Sunday, with athletes donning ceremonial blazers featuring motifs inspired by 5,000 years of civilisation.

More than 100 Indian athletes took part in the ceremony, led by Paralympic medallist sprinter Simran Sharma and top shuttler Pramod Bhagat, who carried the national flag as the contingent marched in with the Tricolour fluttering proudly.

The ceremonial blazers featured prints of seals from the Indus Valley, drawing on the ancient script and motifs of one of the world's oldest civilisations.

"Team India walked out wearing more than just ceremonial dress -- they wore 5,000 years of civilisation. The Indian contingent's ceremonial blazer is a tribute to our heritage," the Paralympic Committee of India said.

The blazers also featured SaptSindhu on the collar, honouring the land of the seven rivers



Simran Sharma and Pramod Bhagat lead the Indian contingent as official flagbearers at the opening ceremony of the Asian Para Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

and the mighty Saraswati, while the Tricolour was placed prominently on the pocket.

India is fielding a 281-member contingent, comprising 168 athletes -- 112 men and 56 women -- competing across 11 disciplines.

The Games will conclude on October 24, with around 3,000

athletes from 45 nations competing under the motto "Imagine One Heart".

India enjoyed its most successful Asian Para Games campaign in Hangzhou in 2023, finishing fifth in the medal standings with a record haul of 111 medals -- 29 gold, 31 silver and 51 bronze.

MANIPUR VIOLENCE: 28 houses set ablaze in Kamjong distt in 24 hrs

IMPHAL, Oct 18 (PTI)

AT LEAST 28 houses were set ablaze in separate incidents in Manipur's Kamjong district in the past 24 hours, with suspected militants targeting both Naga and Kuki settlements, forcing civilians to flee their homes and take shelter in forests and a nearby Army camp, police said.

At least 13 abandoned houses belonging to members of the Naga community were set on fire by unidentified miscreants at Pilog and Skipe villages near the international border with Myanmar on Sunday.

"Necessary security measures have been taken in connection with the incident," a police statement said.

The houses had been abandoned following earlier attacks on Naga



villages, including Pilog, near the international border with Myanmar.

In a separate incident on Sunday morning, two persons were injured

when unidentified armed miscreants opened fire on a car travelling between Gwaltebi and Mahadeva along National Highway 202, under

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CJI inaugurates Ladakh bench of HC in Leh

LEH, Oct 18 (PTI)

CHIEF Justice of India Justice Surya Kant on Sunday inaugurated the Ladakh Bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh here.

Ladakh Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena called the day a landmark milestone, fulfilling a long-standing demand for a court closer to home.

"A new era of accessible justice begins in Ladakh! Deeply grateful to Chief Justice of India, for inaugurating the Ladakh Bench of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, today at Leh, in the gracious presence of Supreme Court Judges and the Chief Justice and other companion Judges of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh," Saxena said on X after the event.

He said the Ladakh Bench of the High Court and the CJI's successive visits to the Union Territory within six months reflect his commitment to ensuring "access to justice" to all, par-



Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant and others in a group photograph during the inauguration of Ladakh Bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, in Leh. (PTI)

ticularly to remote communities in Ladakh. "My sincere thanks and gratitude to the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and Home Minister, Amit Shah, for consistently guiding Ladakh on the path of prosperity and inclusive development," he said.

Justice Surya Kant inaugurated the Ladakh Bench of the High Court at the High Court Complex, Melangthong, Leh.

Supreme Court Justices M M Sundresh, P S Narasimha, N Kotiswar Singh and Arun Palli, along with Attorney General for

CJI announces virtual access to SC for Leh, Kargil lawyers

LEH, Oct 18 (PTI)

CHIEF Justice of India Justice Surya Kant on Sunday said lawyers from Leh and Kargil would soon be able to virtually access the Supreme Court from the Ladakh Bench of the High Court.

All matters originating from Ladakh would be listed on a single day and heard through video-conferencing, sparing lawyers and litigants the time, cost and hardship of travelling to Delhi, Justice Kant said as he inaugurated the Ladakh Bench

of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh here.

Describing the inauguration as a historic step, the CJI referred to the establishment of a Special Court in Leh in 1870, observing that while the institution had passed into history, the geographical challenges that restricted access to justice persisted for generations.

"For close to a century, the high court that served Ladakh sat beyond the Great Himalayas, reachable in winter only by air," he said.

India R Venkataramani, Chief Justice of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati, and companion Judges of the high court attend-

ed the function, officials said.

The inauguration has been hailed as an important occasion in Ladakh's institutional development.

Rajnath to represent India at SCO Council meet in Tajikistan

NEW DELHI, Oct 18 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh will represent India at the upcoming meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, to be held at Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on October 19-20, the Government said on Sunday.

The meeting will focus on strengthening multilateral cooperation among the member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), particularly in the areas of trade, economy, investment, connectivity, innovation and cultural-humanitarian exchanges, the Defence Ministry said.

India remains actively engaged in various SCO mechanisms and



continues to contribute to regional cooperation through initiatives in areas such as startups and innovation, digital public infrastructure, and people-to-people exchanges, it said in a Statement. "Singh will visit Dushanbe to represent India at the 25th meeting of the Council of Heads of Government (CHG) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, scheduled to be held on October 19-20," the

Ministry said. The forum is also expected to review the progress of the ongoing cooperation initiatives and consider decisions relating to the Organisation's financial and institutional functioning.

The meeting will provide an opportunity for India to exchange views with the other SCO member States on advancing practical and mutually beneficial cooperation within the Organisation, the Ministry said. The previous CHG meeting was held in Moscow on November 18 last year, where External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had represented India. The SCO is an influential economic and security bloc that has emerged as one of the largest transregional international organisations.

Indian refiners' fuel exports to West jump 43% as they keep processing Russian crude

NEW DELHI, Oct 18 (PTI)

REFINERIES in India and two other countries that run on Russian crude shipped 1 billion euros (USD 1.2 billion) of oil products to sanctioning countries in September, up 43 per cent from August, according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

Reliance Industries Ltd's Jamnagar refinery in Gujarat supplied six of the seven cargoes unloaded at EU ports that month, despite the bloc's ban on fuel made from Russian crude.

The CREA report covers refineries in India, Türkiye and Brunei.

The EU took 667 million euros' worth of their products, Australia 168 million euros, the US 154 million euros and New Zealand 19 million euros. CREA estimated 295 million euros' worth was refined from Russian crude. Jamnagar also supplied the group's largest US-bound exports, worth 122 million euros, and Russian crude made up 32 per cent of its imports from July to September. Italy received three of the seven EU-bound shipments, Romania two, and Spain and Cyprus one each.

Exports reported as destined for EU ports from refineries running on Russian crude rose 80



per cent in value, including a single 104,000-tonne cargo of gasoil (diesel) from Jamnagar still en route to Rotterdam.

The EU banned imports of oil products refined from Russian crude in January 2026. The ban exempts net crude exporters, but CREA says the exemption leaves a gap, since net-export status does not stop a country from refining Russian-origin crude.

The report calls for applying the ban at the refinery level, barring products from any plant that has processed Russian crude in the previous six months, whatever the product's declared origin.

INTAKE DROPPED AT ALL

THREE OF ITS LARGEST IMPORTING REFINERIES: Jamnagar by 27 per cent, Indian Oil Corporation's (IOC) Paradip by 21 per cent and Nayara Energy's Vadinar by 8 per cent. "Despite the decline, Vadinar overtook Jamnagar as India's largest importer of Russian crude." "India was the second-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels in September 2026, importing a total of 4.1 billion euros of Russian hydrocarbons. Crude oil constituted 88 per cent of India's purchases, totalling 3.6 billion euros. Coal (309 million euros) and oil products (161 million euros) constituted the remainder of its monthly Russian

imports," CREA said.

Imports at smaller installations also mostly trended downwards, with the HREL Mundra Oil Terminal and the Kochi refinery lowering intakes by 74 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively, month-on-month. "The main exception was the IOC Mundra Oil Terminal, which received 570 thousand tonnes of Russian crude in September after receiving none in August," CREA said.

India was Russia's second-largest fossil fuel customer in September, spending 4.1 billion euros on Russian hydrocarbons, 88 per cent of it crude. Only China bought more. Since December 2022, India has taken 37 per cent of Russia's crude exports, against China's 50 per cent.

India was a marginal buyer of Russian oil before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. It became a top customer as Western buyers retreated and Russia sold at steep discounts. Urals crude averaged USD 90.7 a barrel in September but still traded USD 23 below Brent, unchanged from August.

Analysts at Kpler say the fall in volumes partly reflects tighter supply and stronger Chinese competition for Russian barrels, not only US pressure. They expect India's October imports to hold at 1.8-1.9 mn barrels per day.

Yemen Gov't forces launch fresh offensive against Houthis

SANAA, Oct 18 (IANS)

FIERCE fighting erupted near Yemen's strategic Bab al-Mandeb Strait on Sunday as Government forces launched a fresh offensive against Houthi positions in the area, a Government military official told Xinhua.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said units from the Giants Brigades and Nation Shield Forces advanced from several directions to seize key Houthi-held positions overlooking approaches to the strait.

Heavy clashes were raging as Houthi fighters resisted the advance from fortified positions and trenches, the official said, adding that extensive minefields had complicated the government forces' push, *Xinhua News Agency* reported. "The fighting is among the fiercest we have seen in the area," the official said. "The Houthis are heavily entrenched, and our forces are trying to

break through their defensive lines."

The official said the Houthis also deployed fibre-optic-guided first-person-view kamikaze drones known as "Shawaz" against the advancing government troops.

Several people on both sides were killed or wounded in the fighting, the official said, without giving specific figures.

The outcome of the offensive remained unclear as clashes continued, with no confirmation of significant territorial gains. The latest push follows previous attempts by government forces to break through Houthi defences in the area. Bab al-Mandeb, separating Yemen from the Horn of Africa, connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and serves as a vital passage for international trade. The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen announced that it had intercepted and destroyed four drones over Riyadh and Saudi Arabia's eastern.