



(L) Uzbek counterpart Bakhtiyor Saidov, (R) EAM S Jaishankar

India, Uzbekistan discuss bilateral ties during Jaishankar's visit

BAKU, Oct 24 (PTI)

INDIA and Uzbekistan discussed key issues on their bilateral agenda and stressed the need for timely implementation of agreements reached at the highest level during a meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Uzbek counterpart Bakhtiyor Saidov in Azerbaijan's Baku.

Jaishankar was in Azerbaijan on Friday for a day-long visit to review bilateral ties. He met President Ilham Aliyev and held

talks with Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov on trade, investment, energy, tourism and connectivity.

"Nice to see Uzbek @FM_Saidov at Baku," Jaishankar said in a post on X. He also shared a photograph of him alongside the Foreign Minister but did not provide further details of the meeting.

Saidov arrived in Baku on Friday from Georgia after attending the first joint meeting of the foreign ministers of Georgia and

five Central Asian countries -- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

"Discussed key issues on the bilateral agenda and emphasised the importance of the timely and effective implementation of agreements reached at the highest level," Saidov posted on X.

India-Uzbekistan ties have seen multiple high-level exchanges this year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred Uzbekistan's highest

honour for foreign leaders, the Oliy Darajali Do'stdlik Order, during a visit to the country in August.

During Modi's two-day visit, New Delhi and Tashkent upgraded their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and set a target of USD 5 billion in bilateral trade.

The two sides also signed 11 agreements to boost cooperation in key sectors, including mining and tourism, and agreed

(Contd on page 3)

Trump revives idea of military intervention in Cuba

■ “We’re going to come back from Iran, those beautiful ships will pass Cuba. We’ll have one of them stop about 50 yards off the coast. And then we’re going to send (Secretary of State) Marco Rubio in to finish up the deal,” said Trump. He previously suggested the country would “be next” in terms of intervention abroad.

■ By Meg Kinnard and Josh Boak
FORT MYERS, Oct 24 (AP)

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Friday told a rally for candidates in South Florida that US warships returning from the Middle East could stop over in Cuba on their way back from the Iran war, his latest suggestion of taking an interventionist

approach to the nearby country.

Trump first floated this idea earlier this year, but has not mentioned it in recent months. But he revived it in response to a shouted question from the crowd about the island nation. He was

campaigning just days ahead of midterm elections in which voters have expressed concern about the impact the US war on Iran has had on prices of goods from gas to groceries.

“We’ll do a little stopover,”

Trump said. “Actually, what we’re going to do with Cuba is, we’re going to come back from Iran. Those beautiful ships will pass Cuba. We’ll have one of them stop about 50 yards off the coast. They’ll raise up their hands. And then we’re going to send (Secretary of State) Marco Rubio in to finish up the deal.”

Both Rubio and Trump have been bullish on action in Cuba, with Trump previously suggesting the country would “be next” in terms of intervention abroad, following the winding down of the Iran war he has long forecast but which has not yet happened.

In May, he and Rubio raised the spectre of US military intervention in Cuba, a renewed threat that took on greater weight after the administration announced criminal charges against the island’s former leader, Raul Castro. Trump told reporters in the Oval Office that previous US Presidents had considered intervening in Cuba for decades but that “it looks like I’ll be the one that does it.”

US is reducing staffing at 4 M-E embassies over threats from Iran

■ By Matthew Leap
WASHINGTON, Oct 24 (AP)

THE State Department is reducing staffing at four US embassies in the Middle East after receiving intelligence that Iran has stepped up efforts to target American personnel in the region and elsewhere.

In a memo sent to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Director of National Intelligence Jay Clayton said his teams “have received intelligence that Iran has substantially increased efforts to target US personnel.” “The lethal plotting efforts by the Iranians against US citizens have reached advanced stages in both the Middle East and certain other countries,” Clayton wrote.

The memo emerged shortly after the State Department announced it is reducing staff at the US embassies in Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The three officials said the threats from Iran and Yemen’s Iranian-backed Houthi rebels are related to the staffing changes.

Over 4,000,000 protest across France, challenging Macron

Paris protesters threw projectiles while police fired volleys of tear gas and used water cannons to disperse people. 64 people including six minors arrested, 40 placed in police custody.

■ By Thomas Adamson
and John Leicester

PARIS, Oct 24 (AP)

CLASHES erupted in Paris Saturday at the end of a major demonstration as more than 4,00,000 people protested across France over school funding and soaring living costs, challenging President Emmanuel Macron's Government a week after wide-



Police officers detain a protester during a demonstration against rising living costs in Strasbourg, France on Saturday. (AP/PTI)

spread rioting and looting.

The Paris march began peacefully. But near its endpoint at Porte de Vincennes, some pro-

testers threw projectiles while police fired volleys of tear gas and used water cannons to disperse people.

The Interior Ministry put nationwide turnout at 4,10,000, including 1,10,000 in Paris. Authorities had confined the capital's march to the city's southeastern edge, keeping protesters away from central neighbourhoods hit by last weekend's destruction.

Elsewhere in France, police used tear gas in Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand and Strasbourg and water cannons in Nice and Nantes, French media reported. In Marseille, officers fired tear gas during clashes with several dozen people near the march's endpoint.

The Paris prosecutor's office said 64 people had been arrested in connection with Saturday's demonstration and 40 placed in police custody. Those arrested included six minors.

(Contd on page 3)

Govt aims to chart strategy to achieve \$250 bn engineering exports by 2030

NEW DELHI, Oct 24 (IANS)

THE Government on Friday held brainstorming sessions with the industry leaders and policymakers to chart a strategy to achieve engineering goods exports of \$250 billion by 2030.

The Department of Commerce and EEPC India held multiple sessions as part of the Chintan Shivar for the engineering sector.

Rajesh Agrawal, Secretary, Department of Commerce, highlighted the resilience of India's exports amid global uncertainties. India's total exports of merchandise and services grew by 14 per cent year-on-year to \$476.20 billion during April–September 2026–27. During the first six months of FY2026–27, engineering exports crossed \$70 billion, registering nearly 20 per cent growth over the corre-



sponding period of the previous year, he said.

The discussions highlighted concerns about the availability of quality raw materials at competitive prices and the need for a resilient, competitive supply chain to support the long-term growth of engineering exports.

It was noted that volatility in input costs, supply-chain disruptions, global overcapacity and trade-protective measures can affect the competitiveness of Indian engineering exports.

Addressing emerging challenges, including Quality

Control Orders (QCOs), sustainability-related trade measures and climate-linked requirements affecting market access, Agrawal emphasised the need for ambitious export targets to drive growth and global competitiveness.

He further stressed industry-wide collaboration to address common challenges and identify practical solutions, while encouraging stakeholders to adopt relevant global best practices to strengthen India's manufacturing ecosystem and enhance engineering export potential.

Vimal Anand, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce, underscored the promising export performance of the engineering sector and called upon EEPC India to revisit its ambition of achieving \$300 bn in engineering exports by 2030.

IRGC claims full control over Hormuz Strait

TEHRAN, Oct 24 (ANI)

WITH political tensions and US rhetoric over the possibility of military intervention in Iran escalating, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on Saturday claimed that Iran maintained full control over the Strait of Hormuz, asserting that security was being maintained for vessels operating in the region in accordance with Iranian regulations.

The claim came as the IRGC Navy alleged that two super-tankers carrying a combined cargo of more than 4.5 million barrels of crude oil had struck naval mines while attempting to navigate what Tehran described as an unauthorised southern route through the strategic waterway.

Amid the escalating tensions, Iran warned that it would not allow US military vessels to enter the Persian Gulf, challenging Washington's assertions that Iranian military capabilities had been significantly weakened.

Asper Iranian state broadcaster Press TV, Chief of the General Staff of Iran's Armed Forces, Major



Saudi Arabia issues emergency alert over 'hostile aerial threat' in Mecca

RIYADH, Oct 24 (ANI)

SAUDI authorities on Saturday issued an emergency alert warning of a "hostile aerial threat" in the city of Mecca, with the danger later reported to have passed.

The General Directorate of Saudi Civil Defence issued a warning in Mecca Province to alert residents of a potential

danger. In a post on X, it said, "A warning has been issued by the National Early Warning Platform in Mecca Province to alert of a potential danger."

In another post on X, it said later, "Alert: The danger has passed in Mecca Province." Saudi authorities also issued alerts for Jeddah, Yanbu and Taif governorates.

General Ali Abdollahi, said Iranian forces had rendered the US Navy ineffective in the region. "The US President must only dream of their military and army entering the Persian Gulf again. They will take this wish to their graves," Abdollahi said.

"We will under no circumstances and at no time allow US military vessels to enter the Persian Gulf," he added.

Abdollahi also questioned US President Donald Trump's repeated claims that Iran's nuclear facilities had been destroyed, asking why Washington continued to raise concerns about Tehran's nuclear programme if its facilities had already been eliminated.

IRANIAN PRESIDENT PEZESHKIAN TO MEET PUTIN: IRANIAN President Masoud Pezeshkian is scheduled to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow next week, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said, as Tehran and Moscow continue consultations on bilateral cooperation and key regional and international developments.

N Korea's leader Kim visits China to open new cross-border bridge

SEOUL, Oct 24 (AP)

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un visited China on Saturday, inaugurating a new bridge that connects the two countries and saying he hoped to expand cooperation with his powerful neighbour.

Kim's visit to China is his latest move in an increasingly assertive foreign policy as he seeks to align Pyongyang with Beijing and Moscow in a united front against the United States under what he portrays as a "new Cold War." It's his first visit in a year.

Kim arrived in the Chinese border city of Dandong Saturday after crossing the newly-opened bridge, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles affairs related to North Korea and China's official Xinhua News Agency.

He met with Wang Huning, a

member of the Standing Committee of China's Communist Party. The two toured a car factory and promised to strengthen the bilateral relationship.

Kim said that his country "stands ready to work with China to carry forward their historical friendship and expand practical cooperation, thereby delivering tangible benefits to the peoples of both countries," according to Xinhua.

Wang then accompanied Kim to the bridge to send him off, according to Xinhua.

Experts said the opening of the New Yalu River Bridge this month was a key symbol of strengthening ties between North Korea and China and reflected their intent to expand trade, as it is expected to accommodate two-way traffic around the clock, including container shipments and heavy cargo trucks.

Indian Navy's first Squadron concludes training in Maldives

MALE, Oct 24 (IANS)

SHIPS from the Indian Navy's First Training Squadron (1TS) have concluded their training and military engagement in the Maldives, including a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) Coast Guard, the High Commission of India in Male said on Saturday.

The squadron comprises INS Tir, INS Sujata and Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Sarathi, which are on an ongoing training deployment. "The PASSEX with the MNDF Coast Guard, reinforcing the enduring maritime partnership between India and the Maldives," High Commission posted on X.

On Egypt visit, UN chief Guterres says **'we need to stop the widening of war'**

CAIRO (Egypt), Oct 24 (ANI)

UNITED Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for an end to the widening of conflicts, protection of civilians and greater space for diplomacy, saying wars are deepening global inequalities and intensifying economic pressures, as he arrived in Egypt on Saturday.

In a post on X, Guterres said, "I just arrived in Egypt. Amid intensifying conflicts, I carry a message with me: We need to stop the widening of war, protect civilians & create the political space for diplomacy & peace." "We must tackle the inequalities that divide societies – & stop the conflicts that are multiplying human suffering & pushing an already unequal world further apart," he added.

Guterres' visit comes amid continuing conflicts in the West Asia, Ukraine and Sudan, with the UN chief warning that the consequences of wars are extending beyond battle zones through energy markets, shipping routes, supply chains and financial systems.

In a media stakeout on October 22, Guterres described the interconnected effects of global conflicts as an "El Nino of war", saying that "conflict is feeding conflict, and the consequences are traveling farther and faster."

He stressed that alleged "attacks" directed against civil-



ians and civilian infrastructure were prohibited under international law and said that "they must stop". "The distance from the Strait of Hormuz to a family home or village market is shorter than what we think," Guterres said, warning that disruptions were affecting global energy and food security and worsening the cost-of-living pressures faced by vulnerable communities.

He also highlighted the grow-

ing economic inequalities exacerbated by conflicts, noting that some countries could borrow more cheaply to protect their populations, while others had to choose between servicing debt and investing in healthcare, education and their future.

"The answer cannot be an ever-widening circle of confrontation, including in the Middle East," he said.

On Yemen, Guterres expressed concern over escalating hostilities around Taiz and elsewhere, as well as Houthi attacks against civilian targets in Saudi Arabia, which he emphasised as "totally unacceptable". He called for restraint and said Yemen needed a political horizon, adding that his special envoy was engaging with all parties to preserve dialogue.

Turning to the occupied Palestinian territory, the UN chief said essential aid in Gaza remained severely restricted ahead of winter and raised concerns over difficulties in implementing the comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict endorsed by the UN Security Council.