# Jaishankar, Seychelles FM reaffirm commitment to strengthen ties

NEW DELHI, Nov 26 (ANI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a meeting with his Seychelles counterpart Barry Faure on the sidelines of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting in the national capital on Thursday, where the two leaders reiterated their shared commitment to advancing bilateral ties centred on the welfare of their citizens.

During the meeting, the two leaders spoke about enhancing collaboration within the IORA framework alongside key regional issues.



Faure is currently on an official visit to India to attend the 25th edition of the IORA Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting, which is slated to take place in New Delhi on Friday.

Following his meeting with the visiting dignitary, Jaishankar shared an update on X, stating, "Delighted to meet FM Barry Faure of Seychelles. IORA 50 Years India-Seychelles. Reaffirmed the shared commitment to further strengthening our people-centric partnership focusing on health, connectivity, skilling, energy, cyber and AI.

# USTR: Test Of Endurance

BY T N ASHOK

THE India-US trade negotiations, which appeared to be approaching the finishing line after months of painstaking discussions, have encountered another complication. Washington has put a fresh tariff proposal on the negotiating table, threatening duties of up to 25 per cent on Indian goods while offering to consider a lower rate of 17 per cent if the two countries conclude a reciprocal trade agreement.

The announcement by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) on November 25 has effectively turned the unfinished bilateral trade agreement into a test of economic and political endurance.

The timing is significant. Both Governments have repeatedly spoken of substantial progress and their determination to conclude an agreement that would expand bilateral commerce, strengthen supply chains and deepen strategic cooperation. Yet the final understanding remains elusive. The latest American move suggests that Washington is unwilling to separate the trade negotiations from its broader campaign against what it considers unfair industrial practices by trading partners.

For India, however, the issue is not merely whether its exporters should face 17 or 25 per cent duties. It is whether a trade agreement negotiated under tariff pressure can preserve the country's agricultural interests, manufacturing ambitions and strategic autonomy. The USTR's announcement follows investigations under Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974 into what Washington describes as structural excess manufacturing capacity among 14 economies, including India.

The American administration argues that Government-supported industrial expansion, inadequate labour protections, financial policies and market-access restrictions in these countries disadvantage American manufacturers. India has rejected the central allegation. Its Commerce Ministry has maintained that the country does not have structural excess capacity in any sector and that trade-related concerns should be resolved through the ongoing bilateral negotiations.

The distinction between a proposal and an imposed tariff is important. The USTR has proposed duties of up to 25 per cent, subject to further proceedings, public comments and hearings. It has indicated that the additional rate could be adjusted to 17 per cent if India concludes a reciprocal trade agreement responsive to Washington's findings. The proposal therefore creates a fresh negotiating deadline, although it does not constitute an immediate imposition of the new duties. The USTR has invited comments until January 5, 2027, with hearings scheduled to begin on January 25.

For Indian exporters, uncertainty itself carries a cost. Textiles, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, automobile components, chemicals and other manufactured products depend on predictable access to the American market. An additional tariff burden could erode their competitiveness against suppliers from countries enjoying more favourable trade arrangements.



At the heart of the negotiations lies an issue that has repeatedly threatened to derail trade agreements between the two countries: American access to India's enormous agricultural market. The United States wants greater access for its agricultural commodities, particularly corn, soybeans, soybean meal, dairy products, animal feed and processed food. American agricultural producers see India, with its population of more than 1.4 billion, as a potentially enormous market.

India sees the matter differently. Agriculture supports the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of Indians. Unlike American agriculture, which is characterised by large commercial farms, mechanisation, substantial subsidies and high productivity, India's agricultural economy is dominated by small and marginal farmers. Their capacity to withstand competition from heavily subsidised American producers is limited.

The dairy sector is particularly sensitive. Millions of Indian households depend on milk production, while the cooperative movement has created a powerful rural economic structure. Opening this market indiscriminately to American dairy products could affect domestic producers and the cooperative ecosystem.

There is also the genetically modified crops question. American corn and soybeans are predominantly produced using genetically modified varieties. India's regulatory and political resistance to genetically modified food crops creates another barrier to unrestricted agricultural imports. The February 2026 interim framework attempted to accommodate American demands through tariff reductions on selected products, including tree nuts, fruits, soybean oil, animal-feed ingredients and other agricultural commodities. However, sensitive categories such as dairy, rice, wheat, poultry and certain staple crops have remained protected.

This is the distinction between selective liberalisation and wholesale market opening. India is prepared to offer commercial opportunities where domestic producers can compete, but it is reluctant to expose vulnerable agricultural communities to a sudden influx of cheaper imports.

For any Indian Government, the political consequences of compromising on agriculture could be considerable. Farmers are not simply another industrial lobby; they constitute a substantial electoral constituency. No Government can easily risk alienating them for the sake of an improved tariff arrangement with Washington. If Washington wants access to India's agricultural market, New Delhi wants something equally important in return: access to advanced American technology. This is the other side of the unfinished bargain. India's ambitions in artificial intelligence, semiconductor manufacturing, defence production, telecommunications, advanced computing and digital infrastructure require access to sophisticated American technology and critical components.

The real test is whether the two democracies can negotiate reciprocity without demanding identical concessions. Until that happens, the trade deal will remain tantalisingly close to conclusion, but frustratingly short of the finishing line. *(IPA)*

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# China, other US trading partners hit back at Trump's new tariff plans

■ **By Chan Ho-Himap**
HONG KONG, Nov 26 (AP)

CHINA, Japan and other US trading partners protested planned tariff hikes by the Trump administration and hit back Thursday at allegations they have excess manufacturing capacity.

The new tariffs, which are likely to take effect early next year, were announced Wednesday. They are intended to help reinstate tariffs for most of the economies after the Supreme Court ruling in February struck down most of US President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs implemented last year.




The new import duties followed a months-long Section 301 probe. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said he determined that practices of the 14 economies relating to excess capacity and production in manufacturing are "unreasonable and burden or restrict US commerce."

China, one of the biggest trading partners of the US, is facing a 20 per cent tariff. It slammed the notion of "overcapacity" as a "false premise."

"China opposes its use as a pretext for political manoeuvring," Guo Jiakun, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said at a regular press briefing. "Tariff wars and trade wars serve no one's interests."

The US and China have extended by two months a trade truce that's set to expire on Jan. 10, 2027.

# Chinese military says situation along India border stable

■ By K J M Varma
BEIJING, Nov 26 (PTI)

THE Chinese military on Thursday said the situation along the India-China border is generally stable and both sides are maintaining communication through diplomatic and military channels to implement the consensus to safeguard peace and tranquility.

Asked about the high-level military talks held this month amid reports of aggressive military posturing by Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh, China's Defence Spokesperson Senior Colonel Chen Xi said both sides are maintaining communication through diplomatic and military channels.

"At present, the situation in the border areas between China and India remains generally stable," he said at his monthly press meet here.

"China and India are maintaining communication through diplomatic and military channels such as the General-level meetings and to jointly implement the consensus reached by the two sides and safeguard peace and tranquility in the China-India border," he said in a brief answer.

He reiterated Beijing's stand on Arunachal Pradesh, claiming that it is Chinese territory. China calls Arunachal Pradesh Zangnan and claims it to be part of South Tibet.

Zangnan region is China's territory. China does not recognise the so-called Arunachal Pradesh illegally set up by India, he said.

# Indian Army's 4 microlight aircraft land and take off from Amritsar-Jamnagar Corridor in Gujarat

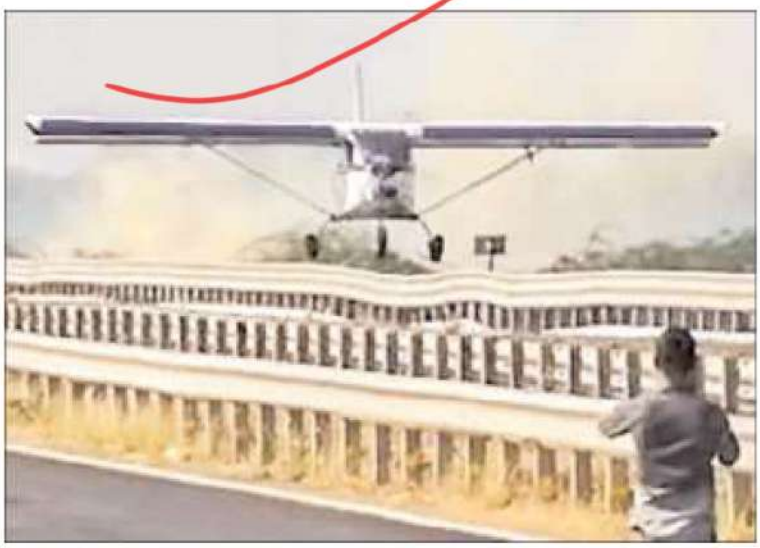
AHMEDABAD, Nov 26 (PTI)

FOUR microlight aircraft of the Indian Army's aero-adventure team successfully landed and took off from a designated highway stretch of the Amritsar-Jamnagar Economic Corridor (NH-754K) in Gujarat, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday, calling it a "remarkable feat".

The Minister of Road Transport and Highways said the exercise was a "historic demonstration of synergy" between the Indian Army and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

The exercise was conducted on November 24 in Patan district of Gujarat, local authorities said.

In a post on X, Gadkari said four microlight aircraft of the Indian Army's 'Team Mountain Eagles', participating in the 'Wings of Valour and Unity Expedition', successfully landed and took off from the Amritsar-Jamnagar Economic Corridor, between chainage km 946 and km 949 in Gujarat. "This remarkable feat underscores the commitment of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways and NHAI to developing world-class highway infrastructure that strengthens connectivity, drives economic growth and meets the strategic and operational needs of our Armed Forces," he said.



The microlight aircraft of the Indian Army's 'Team Mountain Eagles', during the Wings of Valour and Unity Expedition, successfully lands and takes off from the Amritsar-Jamnagar Economic Corridor (NH-754A), between Chainage 946 km and 949 km in Gujarat. (PTI)

The achievement also highlights the potential of national highways to facilitate aero-adventure wherever feasible, with appropriate safety measures and coordination.