

# India, China discuss resuming direct flights, visa services

## First batch of 50 pilgrims left on Friday for Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

DIVYAA

NEW DELHI, JUNE 13

AS THE first batch of 50 pilgrims leaves on Friday for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, which has resumed after six years, India and China are looking to restart direct air services, take steps towards visa facilitation and share data on transnational rivers.

After a meeting Friday between Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, who is visiting New Delhi, the two sides "agreed to continue efforts to stabilise and rebuild ties with a focus on people-centric engage-

ments," according to a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The government last month selected 750 people from over 5,500 pilgrimage applicants. They will travel in five batches of 50 each via the Lipulekh route and 10 batches of 50 each via the Nathu La route between June and August.

The Chinese readout issued on Friday said that the relations maintain "a hard-won momentum of improvement and development".

"The Indian side reaffirmed its support for China's Shanghai Cooperation Organisation presidency. The two sides agreed to

EXPLAINED

**E** Modi-Xi meet could be on cards

WITH BEIJING conveying that New Delhi has reaffirmed its support for China's SCO presidency, the stage may be set for another meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping if Modi visits Tianjin this autumn for the SCO summit. The next Special Representatives meeting between NSA Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, is to be held in India later this year.

jointly make preparations for the 24th Special Representatives' Meeting on China-India Boundary Question, which will be held at an appropriate time," it said, adding that Weidong expressed sympathy and condolences over the Ahmedabad air crash.

The readout said Weidong and Misri exchanged views on bilateral exchanges and cooperation as well as international and regional issues of mutual interest.

The yatra has been on top of India's wishlist ever since the talks to normalise ties, affected by the border standoff of 2020, began in November last year. The last meeting between the two sides took place in Beijing in January.

According to the MEA statement Friday, Misri appreciated the Chinese side's cooperation in facilitating the resumption of the

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra this year, and discussed steps towards normalising ties, which include data sharing on rivers and resumption of direct flights.

"The Foreign Secretary also referred to the discussions during the April 2025 meeting of the Expert Level Mechanism on transboundary rivers and expressed hope for progress on the resumption of hydrological data sharing and other areas of cooperation," the MEA said.

The two sides agreed to expedite the steps involved in resuming direct air services between the two countries, and towards the early conclusion of an updated air services agreement. The MEA noted that both sides agreed to take practical steps for visa facilitation and promote exchanges between media and think tanks. They also posi-

tively assessed the activities planned to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and China, and agreed to facilitate the same, the MEA said.

In this context of strengthening bilateral ties, India on Thursday said it is in touch with the Chinese side, seeking predictability in the supply of rare earth metals, which had been put under the export controls regime by the Xi administration.

"We are in touch with the Chinese side, both here in Delhi as well as in Beijing to bring predictability in the supply chain for trade, consistent with international practices," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters in a weekly briefing, when asked about India's engagement with China on rare earths.

# India abstains from UNGA resolution for Gaza ceasefire

**Suhasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

India abstained from a UN General Assembly resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza for the fourth time in three years, indicating a growing trend in the Modi government's policy not to vote on statements critical of Israel's bombardment of Gaza, in which 55,000 have been killed. India had voted in favour of a UNGA resolution for ceasefire in December 2024, making the latest move a significant departure from India's position just six months ago.

India's vote came in even as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is in Paris for bilateral talks with French Foreign Minister Barrot, who is expected to request a high-level participation from India for a UN conference on creating conditions for a "Two-State solution", that France is organising jointly with Saudi Arabia. Diplomatic sources for both countries said they have not so far heard about In-

dia's participation at the conference dated June 17-20, or if India would be represented by the Permanent Mission of India in New York. The MEA did not comment on the issue.

According to a leaked demarche reported by U.S. media, the Trump administration has "warned" partner countries not to join the conference or to make pledges for the recognition of Palestine. India recognised Palestine in 1988, and is among 147 of 193 UNGA countries that have already recognised the Palestinian state.

## 19 abstentions

The resolution at the UNGA on Thursday evening was introduced by Spain, and applause broke out in the assembly as it was passed with more than 4/5ths of all countries voting for it. India was one of 19 abstentions on the vote along with Albania, Dominica, Ecuador, Kiribati, Malawi and other countries, while 149 of 180 countries voted for the resolution entitled "Protec-



**Ayes and nays:** The tally is displayed on a screen after UNGA voted on a draft resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. AFP

tion of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations". The United States voted with Israel and 10 other countries against the resolution. India was the only country in South Asia, BRICS or the SCO groupings to abstain.

Explaining the vote, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Parvathaneni Harish said that India was "deeply concerned" about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, but

that it decided to abstain "in continuation" of previous votes in December 2022 criticising Israel for human rights violations and in December 2024 that referred the Israeli bombardment of Gaza to the International Court of Justice. India had also abstained from a vote calling for a ceasefire in October 2023 and two other resolutions pertaining to human rights investigations in 2023-2024.

"Our vote today is in

continuation of [these votes], in the belief that there is no other way to resolve conflicts but through dialogue and diplomacy," Mr. Harish said. The single exception in the recent past, was on December 13, 2024, when India joined 158 countries at the UNGA that demanded an immediate ceasefire at the time.

## 'Facilitate aid to Gaza'

The resolution passed at the UNGA had called on Israel and Hamas to comply with international law obligations, and an "immediate and permanent facilitation of full, rapid, safe and unhindered entry of humanitarian assistance at scale in Gaza, including food and medical supplies, fuel, shelter and access to clean drinking water".

In their explanation, the U.S. Acting Ambassador Dorothy Shea criticised the resolution for not being critical of Hamas, although it called for the immediate return of the remaining hostages. However, Russian Ambassador Vasily Nebenzya said the death

toll from Israel's bombardment and blockade of Gaza restricting humanitarian aid into the enclave was unacceptable and a ceasefire was necessary immediately. In the past three months since Israel cancelled the ceasefire, UN agencies, including WHO, estimate that dozens of children have died due to malnutrition effects, while about half a million of the two million people in Gaza face a "catastrophic situation of hunger, acute malnutrition, starvation, illness and death".

There was a time when the world was still horrified that the number of those killed in the Gaza Strip was approaching 15, 20- or 30,000 people," Mr. Nebenzya said. "Now that number is almost twice that - 55,000."

All eyes are now on the French-Saudi conference that will bring together all members of the UNGA to discuss how to implement a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine beginning June 17, just after the G-7 summit in Canada.

# Israel strikes Iran nuclear sites, military leaders; Tehran retaliates with missiles

**Associated Press**

DUBAI

Israel launched a blistering attack on the heart of Iran's nuclear and military structure on Friday, deploying warplanes and drones smuggled into the country to target key facilities and kill top Generals and scientists – a barrage it said was necessary before its adversary got any closer to building an atomic weapon.

Iran quickly retaliated, sending a swarm of drones at Israel as Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned of “severe punishment”.

Israel's military said about 200 aircraft were involved in the initial attack on about 100 targets.

Later on Friday night, air raid sirens sounded across Israel ahead of an Iranian missile attack.

The rumble of explosions could be heard throughout Jerusalem, and Israeli TV stations showed plumes of smoke rising in Tel Aviv after an apparent missile strike. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The Army said dozens of missiles were launched and has ordered residents across the country to move into bomb shelters.

Israel's firefighting service said its teams were responding to several “ma-



**Deepening crisis:** Firefighters extinguishing a fire in a building in Tehran after the Israeli attack on Iran on Friday. GETTY IMAGES

## Modi conveys India's stand of peace to Israel

**NEW DELHI**

PM Narendra Modi called for “early restoration of peace” and conveyed the Indian position in a phone call with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday. » **PAGE 12**

## Fresh conflict may impact oil supply to India

**NEW DELHI**

Israel's attack on Iran poses significant risks to India in terms of curtailed supplies of oil and a 40-50% increase in the export costs, according to trade experts. » **PAGE 15**

“jor” incidents resulting from an Iranian missile attack, including efforts to rescue people trapped in a high-rise building.

“Firefighting crews are handling several major in-

cidents, mainly in the Dan region” around Tel Aviv, a statement said, adding that “firefighters are working in a high-rise building to rescue trapped individuals and extinguish a fire,

as well as responding to two additional destruction sites.”

Iran had been censured by the UN's atomic watchdog on Thursday for not complying with obligations meant to prevent it from developing a nuclear weapon. Israel had told the Trump administration in U.S. that the large-scale attacks were coming, officials from both countries said on condition of anonymity.

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**INDIA ABSTAINS IN UNGA**

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# Iran says Israel attack 'declaration of war', vows 'severe punishment'

Supreme Leader Khamenei says Israel will face 'a bitter and painful fate'; he swiftly appointed new commanders to replace those killed; Trump warns Tehran of 'even more brutal' attacks if it does not make a swift deal on its nuclear programme

**Agence France-Presse**  
TEHRAN

**I**ran called Israel's wave of strikes on Friday a declaration of war, while U.S. President Donald Trump warned Tehran of "even more brutal" attacks if it does not make a deal on its nuclear programme.

Israel said its air strikes had killed several top Iranian Generals, including most of the senior leadership of the Revolutionary Guards' air force, while hitting about 100 targets including nuclear facilities.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned Israel it faced a "bitter and painful" fate over the attacks, while Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi described the attack as a "declaration of war" and President Masoud Pezeshkian said "Iran will make the enemy regret its foolish act".

The Israeli military said Iran launched around 100 drones in response, with air defences intercepting them outside Israeli territory, while neighbouring Jordan said it targeted drones and missiles that violated its airspace.

In the attack's wake, Mr. Trump urged Iran on Friday to "make a deal",

warning of "even more brutal" attacks to come.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel struck at the "heart of Iran's nuclear enrichment programme", taking aim at nuclear scientists and the main uranium enrichment facility in Natanz.

The strikes would "continue as many days as it takes", the Israeli Premier said, while the military said intelligence showed Iran was approaching the "point of no return" on its nuclear programme.

Mr. Khamenei swiftly appointed new commanders to replace those killed, while state media said a senior adviser to the Supreme Leader had himself been wounded.

"The senior chain of command of the air force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps had assembled in an underground command centre to prepare for an attack on the State of Israel," the Israeli military said, adding that its attacks had killed most of them.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the "precise targeting of senior commanders... sends a strong and clear message: those who work toward Israel's destruction will be eliminated".

## Israel strikes Iran's nuclear facilities

Israel launches dozens of air strikes against Iran, targeting its nuclear sites and military facilities and killing top officials and scientists

■ Around 100 drones fired by Iran towards Israel in retaliation, reportedly intercepted

■ Several senior military figures killed, including head of the elite Revolutionary Guards Hossein Salami (right), as well as nuclear scientists

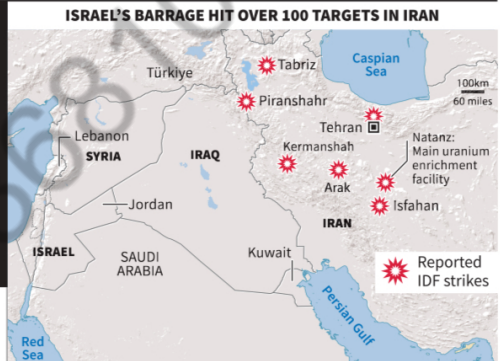


We are at a decisive moment in Israel's history... Israel launched Operation Rising Lion, a targeted military operation to roll back the Iranian threat to Israel's very survival



**BENJAMIN NETANYAHU**  
Prime Minister of Israel

IDF spokesperson says Israel has 'significantly damaged' Natanz



**Dawn attack:** Debris and rubble at some of the sites of an Israeli strike in Tehran on Friday. AFP

The Zionist regime has committed a crime in our dear country with its satanic, bloodstained hands. That regime should anticipate a severe punishment

**AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI**  
Supreme Leader of Iran



Marco Rubio says Israel took 'unilateral action against Iran'

IDF says about 200 aircraft were involved in the attack



**COURT ALLOWS TRUMP TO KEEP NATIONAL GUARD IN CALIFORNIA**

# Marines deployed in LA after Washington wins court battle

**REUTERS**

LOS ANGELES, JUNE 13

US MARINES were deployed to Los Angeles on Friday, the military said, a rare domestic use of its forces as protests over President Donald Trump's immigration raids spread nationwide.

On Thursday, a court ruled in favor of Trump's bid to retain the National Guard in L.A. in reaction to the growing backlash against his immigration policy since his return to power in January.

About 200 Marines will be protecting a federal building in Los Angeles, Army Major General Scott Sherman, said on Friday. The administration has authorized a total of 700 Marines to be deployed in the city.

Neither the Marines nor the National Guard troops in the city had temporarily detained anyone, he added. "I would like to emphasize that the soldiers will not participate in law enforcement activities," he said during a briefing.

It is uncommon for active duty troops to be used domestically during civil disturbances.

The last time the military was



**A demonstrator detained on Thursday in Los Angeles. AP**

used for direct police action under the Insurrection Act was in 1992, when the California governor at the time asked then President George H W Bush to help respond to Los Angeles riots over the acquittal of police officers who beat Black motorist Rodney King.

A court ruled on Thursday that Trump can keep his deployment of National Guard troops in Los Angeles. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' decision

temporarily paused a lower court ruling that blocked the mobilization, although it does not mean that the court will ultimately agree to side with him. "We saved L.A. Thank you for the Decision!!!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

Cities across the U.S. were bracing for demonstrations on Saturday, when those also opposed to a weekend military parade in Washington are expected to take to the streets.

# On BNP suggestion, Yunus says elections could be held in Feb

**REUTERS**

DHAKA, JUNE 13

BANGLADESH'S INTERIM leader signalled on Friday the possibility of holding a national election in February next year, two months earlier than previously announced.

Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel peace laureate who has led an interim government since August, was responding to a suggestion from Tarique Rahman, acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, who urged the vote be held before Ramadan, which begins in mid-February 2026.

Yunus responded positively, saying an election could be held in the week before Ramadan if sufficient progress was made on political and judicial reforms.

The comments came in a joint statement released after the two men met in London.

Yunus, currently on a visit to Britain, last week said the election would be held by the first half of April 2026.

However, pressure has been



**Bangladesh  
Chief  
Advisor  
Muhammad  
Yunus**

mounting from opposition groups for an earlier vote, with the BNP warning of public unrest if elections were delayed beyond December.

Yunus' administration, which came to power after deadly student-led protests forced then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee to India, has recently faced growing discontent.

BNP chief Khaleda Zia was acquitted in January in a long-running corruption case, clearing her path to contest the upcoming election.

Rahman is Zia's son.

Meanwhile, Hasina's Awami League party has been effectively sidelined after its registration was suspended by the Election Commission and its activities banned under the Anti-Terrorism Act.



# Israel-Iran conflict may impact oil supply to India, spike export costs

Global oil prices jumped about 8% in a single day, sparking fears that a sustained escalation could push inflation in India, which imports about 80% of its oil requirement; shutting off Suez Canal and Red Sea will cost Indian exports dearer

**T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**  
NEW DELHI

Israel's attack on Iran and heightened tensions in the area pose significant risks to India in terms of curtailed supplies of oil and a 40-50% increase in the export costs, according to analysts and trade experts.

Global oil prices jumped about 8% in a single day, sparking fears that a sustained escalation could push inflation in India up, since it imports about 80% of its oil requirement.

"The ongoing Iran-Israel conflict is likely to pose risks to oil supply even though India does not directly import large volumes of oil from Iran," Amit Kumar, partner and Energy & Renewables In-

## Slippery slope

The Iran-Israel conflict may pose risks to oil supply even though India does not directly import large volumes from Iran

- About 20% of global oil passes via Strait of Hormuz located between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula
- Any disruption around the Strait of Hormuz may hit oil

shipments from Iraq, Saudi Arabia and UAE, the key suppliers to India

- Disruptions in this area could also significantly hurt India's exports in terms of time as well as costs



dustrial leader at Grant Thornton Bharat told *The Hindu*. "India imports over 80% of its crude oil needs. Hence, even if direct imports from Iran are minimal, global price spikes due to conflict will raise crude oil import costs."

Further, Mr. Kumar said that around 20% of global oil passes through the

Strait of Hormuz, which is located between Iran to the north and the Arabian Peninsula to the south.

"Any disruption around the Strait of Hormuz may affect oil shipments from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE who are key suppliers for India," he added.

Disruptions in this area could also significantly

hurt India's exports in terms of time as well as costs, according to Pankaj Chadha, chairman of the Engineering Exports Promotion Council of India.

"The escalation of the conflict in the Middle East once again closes access to the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, which will have huge cost and time escalation for Indian exports," Mr. Chadha told *The Hindu*.

"Going around the Cape of Good Hope will add about 15-20 days per ship and \$500-1,000 per container, which effectively works out to a 40-50% increase in costs," he added.

## Impact on prices

While oil prices immediately surged following Israel's attack, they are expected to settle back

down, said Norbert Rückert, head of Economics and Next Generation Research at Julius Baer. "Our best guess is that this latest conflict eruption follows the usual pattern, with prices rising temporarily before returning to previous levels," Mr. Rückert said.

Gold prices, too, surged to above ₹1 lakh per 10 grams following the attack. "In times of conflict and uncertainty, gold remains the go-to hedge for both institutional and retail investors," said Amit Jain, co-founder of Ashika Global Family Office Services.

"What we're witnessing isn't just a knee-jerk reaction. It's a continuation of a broader structural uptrend driven by central bank accumulation and long-term inflationary concerns."