



## A LIFELINE FOR SUBMARINES

INS Nistar, India's first indigenous diving support vessel, was commissioned into the Navy in Visakhapatnam on Friday. The ship is designed to undertake complex deep-sea saturation diving and rescue operations. [X/@PRO\\_Vizag](#)

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# Nistar, first indigenous diving support vessel, commissioned into Navy

**Saurabh Trivedi**

NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy on Friday commissioned *INS Nistar*, the first indigenously designed and constructed diving support vessel, in the presence of Union Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth in Visakhapatnam.

The 118-metre ship, which is the first of two diving support vessels being built by Hindustan Shipyard Ltd., is designed to undertake complex deep sea saturation diving and rescue operations – a capability select navies possess across the globe.

Mr. Seth said the commissioning of *INS Nistar* firmly reinforces the role of the Indian Navy as the “first responder” and “preferred security partner” in the region. Supporting the indigenous shipbuilding industry has been one of the pillars of the government’s



Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth during the commissioning of *INS Nistar* on Friday in Visakhapatnam. V. RAJU

“Aatmanirbhar Bharat” campaign. At present, all of the 57 new warships in the pipeline are being constructed indigenously.

## Critical support

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi termed *INS Nistar* as not just a technological asset, but a crucial operational enabler. “Nistar will provide critical submarine rescue support to the Indian Navy as well as our regional partners,” he said.

*INS Nistar* is installed with state-of-the-art diving equipment such as remotely operated vehicles, self-propelled hyperbaric life boat, diving compression chambers. It can undertake diving and salvage operations up to 300 metres depth. It would also serve as the “Mother Ship” for deep submergence rescue vessel to rescue and evacuate personnel, from a dived submarine in distress well below the surface.

# Yamuna's pollution worsens, bacteria levels 4,000 times the safe limit: Report

SOPHIYA MATHEW  
NEW DELHI, JULY 18

DESPITE THE Capital enjoying nearly a month of clean air, its pollution troubles are far from over. A new status report from the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) paints a grim picture of the Yamuna. The river's quality has deteriorated compared to June, with several indicators far exceeding permissible limits.

The worst parameter is the faecal coliform level, an indicator of the presence of bacteria that's directly linked to untreated sewage — it is around 4,000 times the safe limit of 2,500 MPN/100ml set by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The river, which flows about 22 km through Delhi, enters the Capital at Palla.

A comparison of the report dated July 17 and sampled on July 1 with the previous month's report reveals that pollution levels in the river have worsened.

At Palla, the river's Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) is 8 mg/l, already much higher than the CPCB's safe limit of 3 mg/l or less. BOD is a significant water quality parameter which indicates the amount of oxygen required to break down organic material in the water.

July data suggests a sharp spike in organic pollution, particularly between Palla and ITO (70 mg/l). Asgarpur, where the river exits Delhi, shows a slight improvement (24 mg/l), though it remains well above safe limits. (see box)

## ALONG THE RIVER

Sampling Location	BOD (mg/l)	DO (mg/l)	Faecal Coliform (MPN/100ml)
Palla	8	4.4	27×10 <sup>2</sup>
Wazirabad	11	3.4	39×10 <sup>2</sup>
ISBT Bridge	47	Nil	28×10 <sup>5</sup>
ITO Bridge	70	Nil	92×10 <sup>5</sup>
Nizamuddin Bridge	32	Nil	11×10 <sup>5</sup>
Okhla Barrage	46	Nil	22×10 <sup>5</sup>
Agra Canal at Okhla Barrage	40	Nil	21×10 <sup>5</sup>
Asgarpur *	24	0.9	79×10 <sup>4</sup>

\*(After confluence of Shahdara & Tuglakabad drains)

Source: Delhi Pollution Control Committee

## SAFE LIMITS

- Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD): 3 mg/L or less
- Dissolved Oxygen (DO): 5 mg/L or more
- Faecal coliform (FC): 500 MPN/100 ml ideal, 2500 MPN/L maximum limit



This escalating BOD along the Yamuna's course through the city signals a substantial and worsening discharge of untreated or poorly treated wastewater into the river. Twenty-two

The river's quality has deteriorated compared to June. Archive

drains open directly into the river, out of which a few remain partially tapped, according to official records.

In June, BOD levels at the same sites were significantly lower: 5 mg/l at Palla, 8 mg/l at Wazirabad, 31 mg/l at ISBT, 46 mg/l at ITO, 40 mg/l at Nizamuddin, 30 mg/l at Okhla Barrage, 38 mg/l at Agra Canal, and 44 mg/l at Asgarpur.

Equally concerning are the

Dissolved Oxygen (DO) levels, essential for aquatic life, which have witnessed a significant drop over the past month.

It has dipped even at Palla and Wazirabad, where DO levels usually remain above the safe limit.

At Wazirabad, DO levels have plummeted from 6.3 mg/l in June to just 3.4 mg/l in July, below the minimum safe threshold. Further downstream, oxygen levels fall to zero, and only slightly recover to 0.9 mg/l at Asgarpur. The near-total depletion of oxygen renders large stretches of the Yamuna uninhabitable for aquatic organisms.

The most alarming figures, however, are the faecal coliform levels. At ITO Bridge, it was recorded at 92,00,000 MPN/100 ml — over 4,000 times the permissible limit.

Across most locations, the faecal coliform count has worsened since June. Palla recorded 2,700 MPN/100 ml in July (up from 2,100), and Wazirabad 3,900 (up from 2,600). Downstream, the levels were more than 1,000 times the maximum permissible limit. (see box)

The July report also reveals a steep year-on-year rise in contamination. For instance, while Asgarpur recorded the worst contamination levels in July 2024, ITO records the highest pollution levels this year.

The DPCC has been submitting these monthly reports, after analysing water samples at eight locations on Delhi's stretch of the Yamuna, in compliance with National Green Tribunal directives.

**TARGETS RJD AT MOTIHARI RALLY, UNVEILS PROJECTS WORTH Rs 7,200 CRORE**

# PM reaches out to Bihar youth with Rs 15,000 incentive for first-time pvt sector employees

**HIMANSHU HARSH**

MOTIHARI, JULY 18

SETTING THE tone for the NDA's Bihar Assembly election campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday announced that a Central employment scheme providing Rs 15,000 to youth in their first private sector job will be rolled out from August 1. In contrast, the Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) had seized land from the poor on the false promise of jobs, the PM said.

"A few days ago, the Central government approved a major scheme. Under this initiative, any young person receiving their first employment opportunity in a private company will be given Rs 15,000 from the government.



**Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Bihar CM Nitish Kumar and Governor Arif Mohammed Khan in Motihari, Friday. PTI**

This scheme is set to be implemented from August 1. The Central Government plans to invest Rs 1 lakh crore in this pro-

gramme to provide new jobs to new youngsters. Bihar's youth will also greatly benefit from this initiative," Modi said at a rally in

## GOVT & POLITICS

**EC: FORMS OF 90% ELECTORS RECEIVED, 36 LAKH NOT FOUND AT THEIR ADDRESSES**

**PM IN BENGAL: TMC GOVT ENABLING INFILTRATION, HINDERING GROWTH**  
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Motihari town, the headquarters of East Champaran district.

The Union Cabinet on July 1 approved the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme, which was announced in the Union Budget for 2024-25

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# U.S. adds TRF to terror list for Pahalgam strike

**The Resistance Front declared a 'Foreign Terrorist Organisation' and 'Specially Designated Global Terrorist': External Affairs Minister calls it an 'affirmation of India-U.S. counter-terror cooperation'**

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

In a move that is being viewed as an endorsement of India's international counter-terror campaign, the United States on Thursday designated The Resistance Front (TRF) as a "Foreign Terrorist Organisation" and "Specially Designated Global Terrorist". The TRF, which is backed by the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group, claimed to be behind the deadly April 22 terror attack that left 26 people dead in Pahalgam.

The Indian government welcomed the U.S. designation of the TRF as a terror group, with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar describing the move as "a strong affirmation of India-U.S. counter-terrorism

## Terror trail

The U.S. designation follows India's global campaign against cross-border terrorism launched after the April 22 Pahalgam terrorist attack

■ Following Operation Sindoor, the Indian government sent a technical team with a comprehensive dossier on The Resistance Front to New York for presentation

■ The evidence was presented to the 1267 Sanctions Committee that decides on global listing of terrorist groups

■ India had designated the TRF as a terror outfit under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in January 2023



### Under scrutiny:

Security personnel at the Pahalgam terror attack site in J&K.  
IMRAN NISSAR

**Pakistan's LeT proxy:** Founded in 2019 by Muhammad Abbas Sheikh, the TRF is a Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba proxy that claimed responsibility for the Pahalgam attack

cooperation". The External Affairs Ministry added that India's cooperation with international partners will continue to ensure "that terrorist organisations and their proxies are held accountable".

"Today, the Department

of State is adding The Resistance Front as a designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) and Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT). TRF, a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) front and proxy, claimed responsibility for the April

22, 2025, Pahalgam attack which killed 26 civilians," said U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

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**SANCTIONS ON PAKISTAN**

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# TRF was floated to deflect international sanctions against Pak.: security officials

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Resistance Front (TRF), now designated by the United States as a global terror outfit, is a proxy of Pakistan-based proscribed group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the outfit was floated in the aftermath of the dilution of Article 370 to evade international sanctions against Pakistan, according to Indian security agencies.

The TRF has carried out terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir. Notable attacks include the Pahalgam attack on April 22, this year; the killing of nine Hindu pilgrims in Reasi on June 9, 2024; the murder of six migrant labourers and a doctor in Ganderbal on October 20, 2024, the killing of three Army and police personnel in Anantnag on September 13, 2023; and



**Lives lost:** TRF has carried out many terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, including the Pahalgam attack on April 22 this year. ANI

the murder of a BJP leader and two of his family members on July 8, 2020.

The Government of India designated the outfit as a terror organisation under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in January 2023. Founded by Muhammad Abbas Sheikh (now deceased) in October 2019, it is currently headed by

designated terrorist Sheikh Sajjad Gul.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has declared a reward of ₹10 lakh for him.

## Digital platform

The current TRF chief was allegedly a part of the conspiracy to assassinate prominent Kashmiri journalist

Shujaat Bukhari in 2018. “Gul was instrumental in launching TRF’s digital media platform ‘Kashmir Fight’, through which threats were also issued to migrant Kashmiri Pandit employees,” a security official said.

Via ‘Kashmir Fight’, TRF indulged in anti-India propaganda, campaigns for recruitment. It also claimed responsibility for attacks. Its website was registered on December 10, 2024, through an entity said to be based in Iceland. TRF has a presence on several digital platforms, including Mastodon, Chirpwire, and BiP.

“TRF usually focused on security forces and political figures, but late 2024 onward it started to target infrastructure projects and civilians, including non-locals, in Jammu & Kashmir,” the official said.

# EU imposes sanctions on refinery in Gujarat for Russia energy links

**Sriram Lakshman**

LONDON

The European Union (EU) has sanctioned a Gujarat-based refinery owned by Nayara Energy Ltd. as part of a fresh sanctions package announced on Friday targeting Russia's energy sector. The announcement comes just as the U.S. Congress debates tightening sanctions on purchasers of Russian crude oil, with India, China and Brazil being named by U.S. lawmakers as countries that could face penalties.

## **Price cap**

The new EU sanctions also include a lowering of the oil price cap, i.e., the maximum price countries can pay for Russian oil while using shipping and insu-

**The announcement comes just as the U.S. Congress debates tightening sanctions on purchasers of Russian crude oil**

rance from the advanced economies of the G7 group of countries, from \$60 per barrel to \$47.6 per barrel. The sanctions also include an EU-wide import ban on refined petroleum products made from Russian crude oil and a full transaction ban on Nord Stream 1 and 2, natural gas pipelines that connect Russia and Germany. The announcement came after Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico said he would stop blocking the sanctions package over fears

for his country's energy security because of a possible total EU ban on Russian gas by 2028.

"For the first time, we're designating a flag registry and the biggest Rosneft refinery in India," the EU's highest-ranking diplomat, Kaja Kallas, said on X, while listing the highlights of the 18th sanctions package.

Rosneft, a Russian energy giant, has a 49.13% stake in Nayara Energy's refinery (formerly Essar Oil Ltd.), based in Vadinar, Gujarat. The remainder is owned by SPV Kesani Enterprises Co. Ltd., and individual investors.

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**DOUBLE STANDARDS**

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# Indians' spending on foreign education likely to double to \$91 bn in 2030: Report

SIDDHARTH UPASANI

NEW DELHI, JULY 18

INDIAN FAMILIES could end up spending \$91 billion on foreign education for their children in 2030, up from \$44 billion in 2024, with the money they lose due to exchange rate markups and fees charged by traditional banking players potentially approaching half a billion US dollars.

According to a report by global payments firm Wise and Redseer Strategy Consultants, released on Friday, around a quarter of the annual foreign education spending of Indians — amounting to roughly \$11 billion in 2024 — is met through money transferred overseas from India, with the rest largely coming from earnings and financial support within the destination country. According to the report, more than 95 per cent of these remittances go through traditional banking channels, which

EXPLAINED

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How is cost of remittance determined?

THE COST of making international payments rises depending on the number of intermediaries or correspondent banks involved. Fees is charged and operational delays are possible at every stage, prompting central banks to explore the use of their digital currencies for cross-border transfers

charge a mark-up of 3-3.5 per cent on the exchange rate.

"A typical family sending Rs 30 lakh annually may lose Rs 60,000-75,000 to hidden markups, enough to cover several months of living expenses or fund additional courses. Across the 760,000 Indian students heading abroad, this

amounts to a significant hit to their pocket," Wise and Redseer said in a statement, adding that in 2024 these costs totalled \$200 million, or Rs 1,700 crore, for Indian families.

The high cost of cross-border transfers has been a key focus area for the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which has in recent years highlighted the fees and time delays associated with them. According to the World Bank, the global average cost of sending remittances was 6.62 per cent of the amount in July-September 2024.

The cost of making international payments rises depending on the number of intermediaries, or correspondent banks, involved, with fees being charged and operational delays possible at every stage. These costs and delays have been a key driver of central banks exploring the use of their digital currencies to make cross-border transfers. The government and the RBI have pushed for the linking of

national instant payment systems, with India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) linked with Singapore's PayNow. Earlier this week, the National Payments Corporation of India enhanced the UPI-PayNow linkage by adding 13 more Indian banks — taking the total to 19 — whose customers can receive remittances from Singapore via UPI.

According to latest RBI data, the money sent abroad by Indian residents for overseas education under the central bank's Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) fell 21 per cent year-on-year in April to \$164 million.

In fact, expenditure under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme for overseas studies was down 21 per cent for the first four months of 2025 at \$874 million, with the fall in April being the ninth month in a row that money sent abroad for studies under the scheme was down on a year-on-year basis.

FULL REPORT ON

[www.indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)

# 2 Indian migrants killed in Niger terror attack on worksite, another abducted

**SHUBHAM TIGGA**

RANCHI, JULY 18

TWO INDIAN migrant workers were killed in the West African country of Niger and another was abducted after a terror attack on their worksite on Tuesday, officials said.

One of the deceased workers was Ganesh Karmali, 39, from Jharkhand's Bokaro district, a state government official said. The other has been identified only as Krishnan from a southern India state, said an activist from Jharkhand who has been working on the repatriation of the bodies.

The activist, Sikandar Ali, said that the abducted worker was one Ranjit Singh from Jammu & Kashmir.

The Indian Embassy in Niger confirmed the deaths and the abduction in a post on X but did not share details. "In a heinous terror attack on 15 July in Niger's Dosso region, two Indian nationals tragically lost their lives and one was abducted. Our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. Mission in Niamey is in touch with local authorities to repatriate mortal remains and ensure safe release of the abducted Indian.



All Indians in Niger are advised to remain vigilant," said the post.

Karmali was working on a transmission line in Dosso city when he was caught in a crossfire between local police and the militant group that launched the attack. He died on the spot, state officials have learnt.

According to Karmali's family, his brother-in-law Premal Karmali also worked at the same site and sustained bullet injuries. He is currently under police protection in Niger, along with four other migrant workers from Jharkhand who are safe and looking to return home.

Karmali, a resident of Karipani village under Tilaiya panchayat in Gomia block, was employed by



**Ganesh Karmali from Jharkhand, one of the deceased**

Transrail Lighting Ltd, an India-based company that undertakes power transmission projects abroad. He had been working in Dosso for about a year.

Shikha Lakra, head of the State Migrant Workers Control Room under the Labour Department, confirmed the developments and said: "The matter is being handled by the Indian Embassy in Niger. The body has already been taken into custody by the embassy, and a no-objection certificate has been received from the family." She said: "He died in the crossfire. His brother-in-law was also injured but is safe and under protection. The remaining four workers from Jharkhand are safe and want to return. We've initiated the official process and written to the Embassy."

Lakra said the state Labour Department is coordinating with the Ministry of External Affairs for the

swift repatriation of the body.

Sapna Kumari, Ganesh Karmali's 20-year-old daughter, said her father had assured the family that his company insurance cover was worth ₹40 lakh. "But now the contractor is saying they will only give us ₹12 lakh. Before I could even reach home, they got papers signed from us under pressure," she alleged.

"We haven't even been contacted by the company directly. Only the contractor is speaking to us. We just want justice and for my father's body to return with dignity," she said.

Sapna, who got married earlier this month on July 2, said her father had not attended the wedding but had promised to come on July 20. "I have a two-year-old brother and a four-year-old sister. My mother Yashoda Devi is in shock," she said.

Ali, the local activist, visited the family and said: "I was told the company was pressuring them not to share any information."

On April 25 this year, workers from Jharkhand were caught in a crossfire between police forces in Niger and hundreds of armed militants on motorbikes. While trying to flee the scene, five workers were abducted by the group.

# Syrian forces set to reenter Sweida as clashes restart

**Associated Press**

MAZRAA

Renewed clashes broke out overnight between Druze armed groups and members of Bedouin clans in southern Syria, and government forces were preparing to deploy again to the area on Friday after pulling out under a cease-fire agreement that halted several days of violence earlier this week, officials said.

Government security forces agreed with some of the Druze factions that they would re-enter the area to impose stability and protect state institutions, according to two Syrian officials who spoke on Friday on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly. Bedouin groups arrived on Friday from oth-



Fighters from Bedouin tribes near the al-Mazraa village in Sweida, as clashes with Druze gunmen continue on Friday. AFP

er areas of Syria to join the fight.

Thousands of people remained displaced by the violence and the United Nations has been unable to bring in much-needed humanitarian and medical aid because of ongoing clashes.

The conflict drew air strikes against Syrian forces by neighbouring Israel in defence of the Druze mi-

nority before most of the fighting was halted by a truce announced on Wednesday that was mediated by the U.S., Türkiye and Arab countries. Under that agreement, Druze factions and clerics would be left to maintain internal security in Sweida, Syria's interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, also known as Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, said on Thursday.

# Trump seeks to unseal some probe material as Epstein row deepens

Trump also vowed to sue *The Wall Street Journal* and its owner Rupert Murdoch after the newspaper said that in 2003, the future President wrote a raunchy letter to Epstein, referring to their shared 'secret'; the Republican called the letter 'fake'

**Agence France-Presse**  
WASHINGTON

**P**resident Donald Trump attempted on Friday to control the storm triggered by a bombshell report on his friendship with Jeffrey Epstein, ordering the Justice Department to seek the release of testimony from the prosecution of the late, alleged sex trafficker.

Mr. Trump also vowed to sue *The Wall Street Journal* and its owner Rupert Murdoch after the newspaper said that in 2003 the future President wrote a raunchy letter to Epstein, referring to their shared "secret".

"I look forward to get-



**Call for action:** People calling for the release of Epstein files participate in a protest in Houston, Texas, on Thursday. AFP

ting Rupert Murdoch to testify in my lawsuit against him and his 'pile of garbage' newspaper, the *WSJ*. That will be an interesting experience!!!" Mr. Trump wrote on his Truth

Social platform.

Attorney General Pam Bondi said the Justice Department would ask a court to unseal grand jury testimony from the case against Epstein, apparently

in hopes of dampening fury among many of Mr. Trump's most loyal supporters over what they see as a White House cover-up.

## Conspiracy theories

Epstein, a financier, was found hanging dead in his cell in New York in 2019 while awaiting trial on charges that sexually exploited dozens of underage girls at his homes in New York and Florida.

The case sparked conspiracy theories, especially among Mr. Trump's far-right voters, about an alleged international cabal of wealthy pedophiles. Epstein's death – declared a suicide – before he could face trial super-charged

the narrative. Mr. Trump was friends with Epstein and the two were photographed and videoed together at parties over the years, although there has never been evidence shown of wrongdoing.

The *Journal* reported that Mr. Trump had wished Epstein a happy 50th birthday in 2003 with a letter featuring a hand-drawn naked woman and referring to their "secrets". The letter was reportedly among a slew of well-wishes from other rich and well-known figures for a birthday album.

A furious Mr. Trump said on Truth Social that the purported letter was a "Scam" and "Fake".

# EU announces sanctions on Rosneft-backed crude refiner Nayara Energy

SUKALP SHARMA

NEW DELHI, JULY 18

THE EUROPEAN Union (EU) is sanctioning Indian crude oil refiner Nayara Energy as part of its latest tranche of actions against Russia over the country's war in Ukraine. The EU has also decided to lower the price cap on seaborne Russian crude from the prevailing level of \$60 per barrel. Russian oil giant Rosneft owns 49.13 per cent in the company, which was rechristened to Nayara Energy from Essar Oil after the Essar group sold the refinery a few years back. Nayara Energy has a 20-million-tonnes-per-annum refinery in Gujarat's Vadinar, and operates a network of around 6,800 fuel retail outlets. It also sells part of its fuel production to public sector oil marketing companies.

The action would mean that Nayara Energy would not be able to export petroleum fuels and products to Europe, and potentially hit any of its dealings with European companies.

It could also hit Rosneft's plan to exit Nayara as the EU sanctions could spook prospective investors. To be sure, Nayara Energy is not a big fuel exporter to Europe, and is estimated to have accounted for around 4 per cent of India's total fuel exports to Europe so far in 2025, according to industry data. Reliance Industries (RIL) is the



**Nayara Energy would not be able to export petrol fuels and products to Europe.** *Express file*

biggest fuel exporter in the country, and accounted for around 90 per cent of fuel exports from India to Europe so far this year.

The lower price cap on Russian crude, which has not been specified yet, could be beneficial for India if the new cap is strictly enforced. This is because India is a major importer of Russian crude and if the price of Russian barrels reduces due to a lower price cap, it could potentially lower the cost of imports for India. Currently, Russian crude accounts for around 40 per cent of India's total oil import volumes.

Industry insiders said that the likely impact of the EU actions is not clear yet, and clarity is likely only when details of the sanctions and the new price cap emerge. Importantly, it has to be seen whether the United States will join the EU in these measures, as US action could have far greater

consequences in terms of enforcement of the sanctions.

"We are standing firm. The EU just approved one of its strongest sanctions package against Russia to date. We're cutting the Kremlin's war budget further, going after 105 more shadow fleet ships, their enablers, and limiting Russian banks' access to funding. Nord Stream pipelines will be banned. A lower oil price cap. We are putting more pressure on Russia's military industry, Chinese banks that enables sanctions evasion, and blocking tech exports used in drones. For the first time, we're designating a flag registry and the biggest Rosneft refinery in India. Our sanctions also hit those indoctrinating Ukrainian children. We will keep raising the costs, so stopping the aggression becomes the only path forward for Moscow," Kaja Kallas, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, posted on social media platform X.

In her social media posts, Kallas did not provide additional details of the EU's latest sanctions package against Russia. The EU and the US are increasing pressure on Moscow to reach a peace deal with Kyiv and end the Russia-Ukraine war that began in February 2022.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

**'INTENSE WORK NEEDED', SAYS EU REPORT**

# India-EU negotiators continue to differ on food safety rules

**RAVI DUTTA MISHRA**

NEW DELHI, JULY 18

INDIA AND the European Union (EU) continue to differ on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), which govern food and animal safety rules and are key to India's agricultural and processed food exports to the EU, a status report released by the EU on Thursday following the 12th round of talks earlier this month said.

This assumes significance as the EU is India's largest and most premium export destination for agricultural items, particularly coffee, tea, spices and rice. However, India's exports to the EU have seen limited growth over the years, rising from \$3.02 billion in FY19 to \$4.54 billion in FY25, largely due to the stringent standards imposed by the EU on foreign agricultural products.

"Negotiators made some progress on the articles about listing of establishments, regionalisation and risk assessment. Further intense work will still be required on several pending articles, such as harmonisation, technical consultations or dispute settlement. Work will con-

## 'EU NORMS STRICTER THAN W.H.O. STANDARDS'



EU is India's largest export destination for agri items.

AP

**A KEY** argument from the Indian side has been EU's imposition of pesticide residue regulations and other norms that are often stricter than WHO standards.

**THE EU** regularly rejects Indian shipments, citing gap in standards, including restrictions on the use of methyl bromide fumigation for certain plant products

tinue on these provisions inter-sessionally and at the next round with the objective to consolidate the chapter's text," the EU said on the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) chapter.

One key argument from the Indian side has been the EU's imposition of pesticide residue regulations and other norms that are often stricter than World Health Organization (WHO) standards. The EU regularly rejects Indian shipments, citing differences in standards, including restrictions on the use of

methyl bromide fumigation for certain plant products.

According to the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) report in 2022, the EU enforces stringent aflatoxin limits. Aflatoxins are toxins commonly found on agricultural crops such as peanuts, maize (corn), rice and tree nuts, especially in warm and humid climates. "For instance, the present EU level of aflatoxin in peanuts for direct human consumption is 2 µg/kg for B1 and 4 µg/kg total aflatoxin, and 8 µg/kg B1 and 15 µg/kg total aflatoxin

for further processing. However, Codex (WHO standards) has set the maximum limit at 15 parts per billion (PPB) for peanuts," the EAC-PM report said.

"Also, in spices, the EU has set a stringent limit for aflatoxin B1 and total aflatoxins at 5 PPB and 10 PPB respectively, applicable to chillies and several other spices. However, the US permits aflatoxin levels (total) of 20 PPB for all spices," the report said.

In the Rules of Origin chapter, the EU report stated that the negotiations cover both procedures and product-specific rules related to agricultural and processed agricultural products, fish products, chemical and petroleum products. Discussions also covered wood and paper products, machinery, and industrial items such as railways, aircraft, ships, and medical devices.

"Discussions focused on both market access (tariff schedules) and the remaining articles of the chapter's text. EU and India explored whether solutions could be found for the pending issues in the text. On market access, detailed discussions continued on both industrial products and the agri-food sector," the report on the Trade in Goods chapter said.