

India set to join US-led Pax Silica today on sidelines of summit

Shubhajit Roy

New Delhi, February 19

INDIA AND the US are likely to sign the Pax Silica declaration Friday, a month after US ambassador Sergio Goro announced that India would be invited to join the US-led initiative focused on securing AI and tech supply-chains.

US Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg is in New Delhi for the India AI Impact Summit.

According to the US State Department, Pax Silica is aimed

at bringing “friendly and trusted” countries together to ensure that key technologies are safe, reliable, and not controlled by hostile play.

This strategic initiative, seen as a counter to China’s grip on the global manufacturing supply chain, was launched on December 12, 2025 to “reduce coercive dependencies” and build a “secure, prosperous, and innovation-driven silicon supply chain” — from critical minerals and energy inputs to advanced manufacturing,

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India set to join US-led Pax Silica

semiconductors, AI infrastructure, and logistics.

At the time of the launch, the US, to the surprise of many here, left India out of the initiative, mentioning “allies” such as Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, UK, Israel, UAE and Australia.

This led to concerns that uncertainty around the trade deal was creating broader differences between the two countries.

Ever since the arrival of Gopinath in India, there has been considerable dialling down of tensions between the two countries, and the framework for the

Indo-US trade deal has been agreed upon. Delhi's inclusion in the Pax Silica is an important step towards cementing the partnership in the new frontiers of technology, including AI and semiconductors.

The initiative, according to the US State Department, will also entail protecting sensitive technologies and critical infrastructure from undue access or control by countries of concern and building trusted technology ecosystems, including Information and Communication Technology systems, fibre-optic cables, data centres, foundational models and appli-

cations. India has had concerns over China's involvement in its critical infrastructure such as telecom.

India's entry in Pax Silica comes with considerable investments committed by US companies in Indian AI infrastructure. Overall, this is expected to power India's late-start and growth in the semiconductor mission and the AI race. Sources said the presence of top American CEOs and founders at the AI summit, including Sundar Pichai and Sam Altman, is an indication of Delhi's value in the overall AI and semiconductor landscape.

'PRIVATE FIRMS BEING PROVIDED DOMESTIC TECH FOR REPMs'

Production of rare-earth magnets by yr-end: Govt

Pratyush Deep

New Delhi, February 19

INDIA WILL start producing rare-earth permanent magnets (REPM) by the end of this year, Union Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy said on Thursday.

The minister said Hyderabad-based NonFerrous Materials Technology Development Centre (NFTDC) has developed domestic technology and private companies are being provided with the technology to develop REPMs.

Reddy was addressing a conference titled, 'Indian critical mineral landscape: Foundation for a sustainable future' organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).

High-strength REPMs are crucial for a wide range of technologies, from electric vehicles and renewable energy systems to electronics, aerospace, and defence applications.

But their manufacturing is concentrated in a handful of countries, with China alone controlling over 90% in both manufacturing and processing of raw material needed to produce



From left: Canadian High Commission's Head of Trade and Investment Ed Jager, Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy, and FICCI DG Jyoti Vij at a conference in New Delhi.

ANI

these magnets. In November, the government had approved a Rs 7,280 crore scheme to promote manufacturing of REPM.

Growth drivers

Reddy also said the government has identified four states — Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat and Maharashtra — to promote setting up of critical mineral processing plants.

"Domestic processing and refining capacity needs to be strengthened so that raw material export can be stopped and value creation happens in India," he said, adding that "The Gujarat government has started

work, the Andhra Pradesh government is also ready. We will discuss the same with the Odisha and Maharashtra CMs".

Ongoing talks with US and France

Reddy said India was in talks with the US, France, Canada and a few other countries to create an alternative supply chain for critical minerals and cut dependence on a "single" country.

"We are closely discussing with the US... will tell you when time comes," he said, without disclosing further details.

"We also had a discussion with the mining minister of

France and are working towards a road map," Reddy said, adding that similar discussions are underway with a "group of countries" — except for one, in a veiled reference to China.

These efforts aim to create an alternative supply chain so that no single country can hold a monopoly over the critical mineral value chain, the minister said. The minister's remarks come at a time when India and the US have agreed on an interim trade deal earlier this month. A few days ago, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar participated in the Critical Minerals Ministerial in Washington DC, conveying India's support to the US-led FORGED (Forum on Resource, Geostrategic Engagement) initiative on critical minerals.

These efforts aim to create an alternative supply chain so that no single country can hold a monopoly over the critical mineral value chain, he said.

On the exploration front, the minister said over 4,000 critical mineral exploration-related activities have started in a short span of time.

FULL REPORT ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Switzerland's President announces Geneva as host of 2027 AI Impact Summit

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Summit in 2027 will be held in Geneva, Switzerland's President Guy Parmelin said here on Thursday, making a pitch for smaller countries to "come together" to ensure good governance of AI development, so it is not held in the hands of a few "big powers".

Mr. Parmelin, who also met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi for bilateral talks on Thursday on the sidelines of the AI summit here, said they had discussed cooperating in innovation on artificial intelligence, multilateral cooperation, and trade ties after the conclusion of the India-EFTA trade agreement in 2024.

"Switzerland is looking forward to hosting the 2027 AI Summit in Geneva – and to working with the subsequent incoming host of the 2028 AI Summit, the United Arab Emirates, as partner for the Geneva Summit," Mr. Parmelin told presspersons at Switzerland's "Country Pavi-



Guy Parmelin

lion" at the Bharat Mandapam complex after the plenary session. "It will also consolidate our role as a leading centre for innovation and research in AI," he said adding the next summit would focus on international law aspects of AI.

Asked about the domination of the two big AI players, U.S. and China, who together account for more than 70% of the global AI industry, Mr. Parmelin said smaller countries should "organise" together and build infrastructure, while recognising specific technological breakthroughs in many of the other countries.

"It is very important that we work together so that the [technological fu-

ture of the world] is not just in a few hands of big powers," Mr. Parmelin said in response to a question from *The Hindu*. "We know some countries have taken a way forward, and it's very important that good governance is brought to everyone. Notably, countries like South Korea, France, Switzerland, need to work together to bring good governance to other countries," he added.

In a statement after his meeting with Mr. Modi, the Ministry of External Affairs said both leaders had discussed the benefits of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the four-nation European Free Trade association (EFTA) for bilateral trade.

"Both sides agreed to further strengthen collaboration in innovation-led growth, joint research, sharing of best practices, and capacity building through training and skill development initiatives," the MEA statement said.

Mr. Modi welcomed plans to hold the Fifth Summit in Switzerland.

Bill Gates withdraws from AI Impact Summit keynote address

Hours before the scheduled speech, Gates Foundation announced the decision, stating that it will ensure 'focus' on the AI Summit's key priorities; President of Gates Foundation's India and Africa offices Ankur Vohra replaced him at the summit

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Under a cloud over his relationship with American sex-offender and investor Jeffrey Epstein, Microsoft founder and co-chair of the Gates Foundation Bill Gates pulled out at the last minute from giving an address at the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Summit on Thursday.

Mr. Gates was scheduled to deliver a keynote address at the plenary session after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, French President Emmanuel Macron, Brazilian President Lula, and Google CEO Sundar Pichai and other chiefs of AI global majors. He was among the big names expected to attend the conference, and had been billed as one of the "global visionaries" at the event, in the conference publicity material and website.

However, after the latest tranche of files of the disgraced U.S. investor and convicted paedophile was



Bill Gates arrived in Andhra Pradesh on Monday as planned and met with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. REUTERS

released by the U.S. Department of Justice on January 31, questions have emerged about whether the government will continue to host Mr. Gates, who figures prominently in the documents. Though Mr. Gates has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and expressed regret over his association with the sex-trafficking businessman, photographs and emails recovered from Epstein's computer indicate that the two men communicated frequently and travelled together. The records also

suggest that Mr. Gates consulted Epstein over fundraising strategies for his foundation.

"After careful consideration, and to ensure the focus remains on the AI Summit's key priorities, Mr. Gates will not be delivering his keynote address," a statement by the Gates Foundation issued on Thursday morning said, adding that the philanthropist remained "fully committed to our work in India to advance shared health and development goals".

This statement put to

rest days of confusion over the issue.

Even before the conference began on Monday, government departments and the Gates Foundation appeared to be conflicted over whether platforming Mr. Gates would lead to problems over the Epstein issue.

On Sunday, a day after Opposition MP Priyanka Chaturvedi appealed to the government not to allow Mr. Gates to speak at the prestigious event, the AI Impact Website dropped his entry from the list of global visionaries. However, the agenda continued to list him as a keynote speaker on Thursday.

Confusion prevails

Mr. Gates arrived in Andhra Pradesh on Monday as planned and met with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and discussed a number of projects including the Amravati city project. In Delhi on Tuesday, government sources told presspersons that AI summit organisers had a

rethink and decided Mr. Gates would be dropped from the speaker line-up. However, the Gates Foundation insisted there was no such plan, and that he would deliver the keynote as per the agenda.

To questions at a press conference, Minister of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) Ashwini Vaishnaw gave an evasive response.

"Regarding who's attending, who's not attending... that's personal choices which people make, [about] which we should not comment, and I need not comment on that. If you want to comment, you can comment on your own. But I don't want to comment on it," he said.

The cancellation of Mr. Gates's appearance at the summit in Delhi on Thursday, where he was replaced by the President of the Gates Foundation's India and Africa offices, Ankur Vohra, was the latest in a series of controversies that organisers have had to contend with.

Unresolved India-China boundary is affecting ties, says General Naravane

Kallol Bhattacharjee

DIBRUGARH

The “unresolved” nature of the India-China “boundary” is at the heart of bilateral problems, said former Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane (retd.). Speaking on his newly published novel *The Cantonment Conspiracy: A Military Thriller* at the Dibrugarh University International Literature Festival (DUILF) on Thursday, the former chief of the Indian Army said that the India-China boundary remains “nebulous” and India has always emphasised that it will not tolerate “unilateral use of force” by China.

“China is a very important neighbour of ours with whom we have had a troubled relationship. We have to understand that the trouble that we are having is because of the unresolved nature of the boundary between the two countries,” said General



It's not that boundary issues cannot be resolved. It can be resolved but it has to be resolved through dialogue and discussion

GEN. MANOJ MUKUND NARAVANE (Retd.)
Former Army chief



Naravane, while pointing out that he is using the term ‘boundary’ with extra emphasis as ‘boundary’ and ‘border’ cannot be used interchangeably in case of the Line of Actual Control between India and China.

Comparing the India-China boundary with the India-Bangladesh border, Mr. Naravane said: “The India-Bangladesh border is recognised by both the countries and marked on the map. The India-China border is notional.”

‘Genesis of problem’

“That is the genesis of the problem and that is why

from time to time when these differences of opinion [on the boundary] arise, we have clashes along various parts of this boundary...,” said General Naravane, emphasising that these clashes can be avoided as there are a number of agreements between the two countries to prevent escalation of such situations.

“It's not that boundary issues cannot be resolved. It can be resolved but it has to be resolved through dialogue and discussion,” said General Naravane.

(The reporter is being hosted by DUILF where he is a guest speaker)

SC slams unchecked freebies, questions 'appeasement'

Top court says States must prioritise welfare and development over largesse; asks if they have a tested mechanism to distribute welfare effectively to those who actually need a 'helping hand'

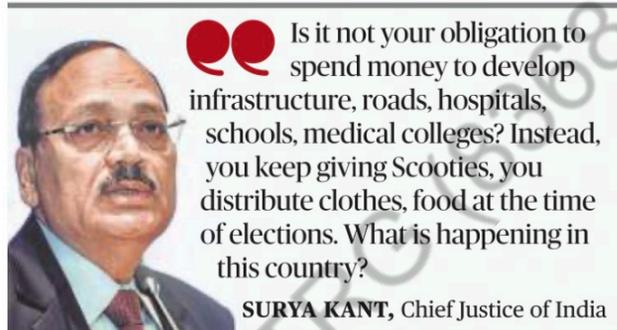
Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday chastised State governments for distributing freebies indiscriminately without even distinguishing between the haves and the have-nots, questioning whether they are following an "appeasement" policy without a thought for the public exchequer ahead of elections.

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a three-judge Bench, said States, even those that are revenue-surplus, must prioritise welfare and development over irrational largesse. Despite running on deficit, the Chief Justice said, States seemed to still have money to randomly splurge on largesse. The court asked whether States had a tested mechanism to distribute welfare effectively, to those who actually need a "helping hand".

"Is it not your obligation to spend money to develop



infrastructure, roads, hospitals, schools, medical colleges? Instead, you keep giving Scooties, you distribute clothes, food at the time of elections. What is happening in this country," the Chief Justice asked.

The court said largesse was distributed in such a way that the most affluent get them first.

"It is understandable that some people cannot afford, the State has to provide. There are children who cannot afford education. You must provide. It is their fundamental right. There are many bright children who cannot afford higher education. It is the

state's duty to extend a helping hand to them. That is welcome. But for people who do not deserve, those who are affluent, why give them freebies? Why do freebies come to their pockets first? Is it not high time for the States to revisit these policies," Chief Justice Kant asked.

The Bench, including Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi, was hearing a writ petition filed by Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (TNPDC), represented by senior advocates Gopal Subramaniam and P. Wilson, challenging the constitutional validity of

Rule 23 of the Electricity (Amendment) Act, 2024.

Mr. Subramaniam said the gap in revenue from electricity and expenditure has expanded over the years. In Tamil Nadu, the gap has touched ₹50,000-odd crore annually, which the government was absorbing.

The senior counsel said Rule 23 would financially stretch the State government to such an extent that it would have to pass on the tariff burden to the consumers.

"The Rule, if implemented, would result in an exponential tariff shock, adversely affecting electricity consumers and placing an unsustainable burden on the public exchequer," the TNPDC petition submitted.

The Chief Justice asked why the State's policy did not allow the government to generate profits from the power sector by making the affluent sections pay for the electricity they consume.

Assamese people will get minority tag after 2027 Census, says CM

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday predicted a near-minority status for indigenous Assamese people after the 2027 Census.

Speaking during the motion of thanks on the Governor's address in the Assembly, he said the State was going through a "very dark period" of demographic change.

"The Assamese community will almost become a minority during the 2027 Census," he said, adding that the BJP-led government was giving people a sense of security amid fear of being outnumbered.

"Today, people from [western Assam's Muslim-dominated] Dhubri, as well as Majuli [the hub of neo-Vaishnav culture], call me up to say they are safe and secure. We are marching towards [being a] minority, but just one lamp is giving light and courage," he said, alluding to the BJP.

The ruling party has been vocal about protecting the election-bound State from "Miya" people, a pejorative term for Muslims with origins in present-day Bangladesh.

Earlier, the Chief Minis-



Himanta Biswa Sarma said the State is going through a 'very dark period' of demographic change. FILE PHOTO

ter said the Muslim population in Assam could become almost equal to that of Hindus by 2041 if the current growth rate continues. According to the 2011 Census, Muslims accounted for 34.22% of the State's 3.12 crore population.

The BJP often cites the example of Dhubri and a few other districts to highlight a "demographic shift". The party claims that the number of Muslim-majority districts in the State is now at least 11.

In 2001, out of Assam's 23 districts, six - Barpeta, Dhubri, Goalpara, Hailakandi, Karimganj, and Nagaon - had a Muslim population of 51% to 74.29%.

In 2011, three more - Bongaigaon (50.22%), Morigaon (52.56%), and Darrang (64.36%) - became Muslim-majority districts.

SIR in 22 States and U.T.s expected from April: EC

Poll body directs Chief Electoral Officers in States, U.T.s to complete preparatory work for special intensive revision; EC in talks with Census authorities on using resources in a staggered manner

Sreeparna Chakrabarty

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) has informed State poll authorities that the special intensive revision (SIR) of voter lists in the 22 States and Union Territories, where it has not yet been conducted, is expected to begin in April.

The 22 remaining States and U.T.s are Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Ladakh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, the National Capital Territory of Delhi, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, Telangana, and Uttarakhand.



People waiting during hearings under the special intensive revision of electoral rolls in Nadia, West Bengal. PTI

In a letter to the Chief Electoral Officers of these States and U.T.s, the EC asked them to complete all preparatory work related to the SIR at the earliest, as the exercise “is expected to start from April 2026”. This preparatory work includes mapping the existing voters with the electoral roll of 2002-2004,

when the last SIR was conducted, and training booth-level officers (BLOs) to carry out the exercise.

Census and SIR

While announcing the schedule, the EC will have to factor in the Census exercise, which is also scheduled to begin in April.

The first phase of the

Population Census 2027, the house listing operation, is scheduled to begin on April 1, with the deployment of 30 lakh enumerators, most of whom are teachers from government schools. However, the BLOs who carry out the door-to-door enumeration for the SIR are also largely government school teachers.

Sources had earlier indicated that the poll body had held meetings with the Registrar General of India as well as the Census Commissioner over how to use the common pool of administrative resources in a staggered manner for both the SIR and the Census.

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Inside the rise of Unitree, glimpse into China's growing tech ambitions

Ananth Krishnan

BEIJING

It's been an eventful week for the Chinese robotics firm Unitree, which has managed to find itself at the centre of national conversations both in China and in India.

First, in the country where it is based, Unitree's latest humanoid robots made a stunning splash on February 16, performing complicated martial arts on China's most watched television spectacle, the annual Chinese New Year gala that is watched by more than half a billion people.

Then, days later, one of Unitree's older robotic models, a quadruped "robo dog", unwittingly found itself in the headlines because of a display by the private Galgotias University at the ongoing AI Impact Summit in New Delhi. The university was forced to close its stall after it emerged that, what some of its representatives claimed was a home-grown design, turned out to be a Unitree Go2 quadruped. A model of the Go2 can be purchased online for \$1,600.

Unitree, a private company started by tech entrepreneur Wang Xinxing (36) who designed his first robot at university, said this week it plans to sell as many as 20,000 humanoid ro-



A Unitree Robotics humanoid robot takes part in a 400m race in Beijing. REUTERS

bots this year, an almost four-fold rise from 2025. The company's name derives from "universe" and "tree", according to a *South China Morning Post* report, taken from a popular Chinese phrase "lighting up the technology tree". The February 16 display of its latest fully autonomous G1 robot stirred wide attention in China, representing a significant improvement from a display only one year ago where robots performed largely stiff hand-waving motions. This year, they displayed martial arts and punched and kicked with flexibility. Mr. Wang's latest kung fu-performing humanoid robots, he told state media this week, "lay the groundwork for future robot deployment" in a range of scenarios.

Unitree, in fact, is only one among many robotics firms reshaping the country's tech landscape. As the *Post* reported, the coun-

try's share of the global robotics market last year was 40%, and the domestic market is expected to grow from \$47 billion in 2024 to \$108 billion in 2028. Unitree and AgiBot lead the pack of a stunning 7,40,000 reported firms in the robotics field in a highly competitive marketplace. The competition is so fierce that Chinese media reported that Unitree and AgiBot had entered a bidding war to showcase their products in the New Year programme offering more than \$10 million to do so (reports the companies have denied).

Rapid expansion

As with China's congested Electric Vehicles market, Chinese analysts are concerned that the rapid and unbridled expansion may see many of these firms struggle to compete or even survive. Robotics is among industries prioritised in the country's 15th five-year plan (2026-30), set to be approved next month. In October, the Communist Party Central Committee approved recommendations for the plan, calling for "faster progress in securing breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields" and to "redouble efforts to develop emerging pillar industries".

"We should launch industrial innovation pro-

jects and make integrated moves to construct innovation facilities, advance technological research and development (R&D), and promote product upgrading," the document said, also calling to "accelerate the development of industrial clusters in strategic emerging fields". It also called for exploring "market regulation rules and work to foster new drivers of economic growth.

Unitree's rise reflects how quickly China's tech space is evolving. Its founder, Mr. Wang, developed his first prototype only ten years ago when he was in university, and spent, according to Chinese media reports, only 20,000 Yuan (then around ₹2 lakh) on developing his first model, a quadruped robot. That model won him a grant of 80,000 Yuan from a competition in Zhejiang province, where he was enrolled at the Zhejiang Sci-Tech University.

Another model he developed when pursuing his master's in Shanghai brought him national attention at a time when China had begun an intense "Made in China 2025" plan to upgrade industries and boost innovation, releasing a flood of funding to universities and provincial governments. This drive has both spurred innovation and fuelled the rise of companies like Unitree.

Iran, U.S. boost military posture amid rising tensions in West Asia

Iran, Russia hold joint naval drills in the Persian Gulf; Trump to reportedly consider whether to launch an attack on Iran soon; Khamenei urges Iranians to resist external aggression, quoting a Koran verse; talks in Geneva make little progress

Stanly Johnny

Tensions remained high in West Asia on Thursday as the U.S. continued to bolster its military presence in the region, Iran conducted naval drills along with Russia in the Persian Gulf and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged Iranians to resist any external aggression.

“There are many reasons and arguments that one could make for a strike against Iran,” White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said in Washington, adding that “Iran would be very wise to make a deal with President Trump”.

U.S. media reported on Wednesday that President Donald Trump would decide whether to strike Iran or not as soon as this weekend. The U.S. has deployed one aircraft carrier and dozens of fighter jets, warships, guided destroyers, fuel tankers and missile defence systems to the region. A second air-

craft carrier is expected to reach the Mediterranean Sea next week.

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei posted a verse from Koran in social media on Thursday, indicating that an attack could be imminent and urging Iranians to resist. “So should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he assailed you,” it read.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced on Thursday that Iranian and Russian forces have successfully carried out a mock operation to rescue a hijacked vessel during combat naval drills near the Bandar Abbas port in the Persian Gulf. This is the second live-fire drill IRGC is carrying out since tensions between the U.S. and Iran spiked last month.

Russia warned against an “unprecedented escalation of tension” around Iran and urged restraint amid the U.S. military build-up in the region.



Preparations afoot: Members of the Iranian Army attend a joint naval exercise of Iran and Russia in Iran on Thursday. REUTERS

“These are planned exercises and they are agreed upon in advance,” Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said in Moscow.

“Russia continues to develop relations with Iran and in doing so, we call on our Iranian friends and all parties in the region to exercise restraint and prudence” he added.

Iran and the U.S. held a second round of talks on February 17 in Geneva under French Oman’s mediation. Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi had said both

sides had made “progress” in talks and agreed on “guiding principles” for future talks. But the Americans were less optimistic. Vice-President J.D. Vance said in an interview that “gaps remain” between the two sides.

Iran has said it would negotiate only about its nuclear programme, while the U.S., according to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, wants to put Iran’s missile programme and its support for regional non-state allies also on the

agenda. The U.S. also wants Iran to end uranium enrichment completely.

Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, said on Thursday that Iran would not abandon its right to nuclear enrichment. “Iran’s nuclear programme is proceeding according to the rules of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and no country can deprive Iran of the right to peacefully benefit from this technology,” Mr. Eslami said at an event in Tehran, according to state media.

In June, the U.S. joined Israel to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities. Mr. Trump then claimed that the U.S. “obliterated” Iran’s nuclear programme. Earlier this year, he asked Iran to make a deal over its nuclear programme or face “profound consequences”.

Iran has previously said it was not seeking to build a bomb, but has ruled out giving up its nuclear programme entirely.

Former South Korean President Yoon gets life term for imposing martial law in 2024

Associated Press
Seoul, South Korea

FORMER SOUTH Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was found guilty of leading an insurrection on Thursday and sentenced to life in prison for his brief imposition of martial law in 2024, a ruling that marks a dramatic culmination of the country's biggest political crisis in decades.

The conservative leader was ousted from office after he declared martial law and sent troops to surround the National Assembly on Dec. 3, 2024, in a baffling attempt to overcome a legislature controlled by his liberal opponents.

Judge Jee Kui-youn of the Seoul Central District Court said he found Yoon, 65, guilty of rebellion for mobilizing military and police forces in an illegal attempt to seize the Assembly, arrest political opponents and establish unchecked power for an indefinite period.

Yoon's martial law imposition, the first of its kind in more than four decades, recalled South Korea's past military-backed governments when authorities occasionally proclaimed emergency decrees that allowed them to station soldiers, tanks and armored vehicles on streets or in public places such as schools to prevent anti-government demonstrations.

As lawmakers rushed to the



Former President Yoon Suk Yeol attends a hearing at the Constitutional Court in Seoul on February 11, 2025. FILE

National Assembly, Yoon's martial law command issued a proclamation declaring sweeping powers, including suspending political activities, controlling the media and publications, and allowing arrests without warrants.

The decree lasted about six hours before being lifted after a quorum of lawmakers managed to break through a military blockade and unanimously voted to lift the measure.

Yoon was suspended from office on Dec. 14, 2024, after being impeached by lawmakers and was formally removed by the Constitutional Court in April 2025. He has been under arrest since last July while facing multiple criminal trials, with the rebellion charge carrying the most severe punishment.