

AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED IN JUNE 2021

India to extend Myanmar pulse deal for 5 yrs to secure supplies amid global supply chain shocks

Harikishan Sharma
New Delhi, March 19

INDIA HAS decided to extend its agreement with Myanmar for the import of pulses for another five years beyond 2025-26, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

It is learnt that the Ministry of Commerce has informed the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and the Ministry of External Affairs that the existing memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Myanmar may be for another 5 years beyond 2025-26. It also said that an additional quantity of 1 lakh tonnes of Tur dal may be allowed to Myanmar for the financial year 2026-27 apart from the previously agreed quantity of one lakh tonnes.

In June 2021, India and Myanmar signed an agreement to promote the trading of Urad and Tur dals. As per the agreement, India made a commitment to import an annual quantity of 2.5 lakh metric tonnes of Urad and 1 lakh tonnes of Tur from Myanmar, through private trade, over the five years — from 2021-22 to 2025-26 (April-March). The agreement was signed between Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce and India's Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution.

● Import of pulses from Myanmar



YEAR	TUR	URAD
2020-21	0.86	3.28
2021-22	2.03	5.87
2022-23	2.17	5.12
2023-24	2.08	6.07
2024-25	2.62	7.15

(IN LAKH TONNES)

The agreement was to expire at the end of March, this year.

According to sources, the decision to extend the pulses import agreement with Myanmar has been taken after reviewing prices and availability of essential commodities.

The move comes at a time when the US and Israel's war with Iran has caused global supply chain disruptions, posing threats to fuel and fertilizer security. In the midst of this, the government's move is being seen as a step towards ensuring food security. The move is also significant as the domestic production of Tur and Urad is pegged to remain low during 2025-26. India's annual pulses demand is 28-29 million tonnes, but its production has remained about 24-25 million tonnes during the last three years, leaving the country dependent on imports to meet the demand.

Tur is the second biggest

pulse in terms of production in India, after gram. As per the Second Advance Estimate of Production of Food Grains for the year 2025-26 released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the Tur production is estimated to come down to 3.45 million tonnes in 2025-26 from 3.64 million tonnes in 2024-25. Urad production is also pegged to lower (1.74 million tonnes) during 2025-26 as compared to 2.24 million tonnes in the previous year.

In the recent years, Myanmar has emerged as one of India's key suppliers of pulses. As per the data available with the Ministry of Commerce, India imported 3.32 lakh metric tonnes of Tur (pigeon peas) from Myanmar during April-January 2025-26, which is 44 per cent higher as compared to 2.24 lakh metric tonnes during the corresponding period of fiscal year 2024-25.

Doraiswami, Indian High Commissioner to UK, is now the new ambassador to China

Express News Service

New Delhi, March 19

INDIAN HIGH Commissioner to the UK, Vikram Doraiswami, has been appointed as the new ambassador to China. Doraiswami, a 1992-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, has served in China in the early years of his diplomatic career. He will succeed current Indian envoy in Beijing, Pradeep Kumar Rawat.

After his in-service training in Delhi from 1992-1993, Doraiswami was posted to the High Commission of India in Hong Kong in May 1994 as Third Secretary. He learnt Chinese, taking an elective diploma in the language at the New Asia Yale-in-China language school of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He was posted at the Indian embassy in Beijing in September 1996 where he served for nearly four years.

His present appointment to Beijing comes at a time when India and China are repairing their ties after the border stand-off that began in May 2020, and when deployment of troops at the LAC remains. The two sides have been engaged in a rapprochement since October 2024, after they agreed on a border pact and followed by a meeting between Prime Min-



Vikram Doraiswami will succeed the Indian envoy in Beijing, Pradeep Kumar Rawat

ister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Doraiswami is expected to take up the assignment shortly, the MEA said, while announcing the appointment. He has served as India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh (October 2020-September 2022), Indian ambassador to South Korea (April 2015-July 2018) and Indian ambassador to Uzbekistan (October 2014-April 2015). He has headed the Americas division, Bangladesh-Myanmar division, SAARC division and started the Indo-Pacific division in the Ministry of External Affairs in Delhi. He was also Private Secretary to two Prime Ministers — PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. Prior to joining the Indian government, he worked for a year as a journalist. He has a Masters' Degree in History from the University of Delhi.

Modi, Jaishankar call for dialogue as strikes escalate

French President says India and France are working closely together to reduce tensions in West Asia; recent attacks against energy installations are 'deeply disturbing', says MEA spokesperson

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India and France are “working closely together” to de-escalate tensions in West Asia, French President Emmanuel Macron said, after a conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, one of many calls that Mr. Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made to leaders worldwide.

As Israel and Iran both stepped up attacks on energy installations and gas fields across the Gulf region, the government said this targeting of civilian infrastructure was “deeply disturbing” and “unacceptable”, calling for them to stop.

In the past, New Delhi had condemned Iran's attacks on Gulf states, but not the strikes by the United States and Israel. Just last week, India had co-sponsored a UN Security Council resolution that only condemned strikes by Iran on its neighbours. In a marked shift, however, the government is now emphasising the need to avoid at-



Since February 28, Prime Minister Modi has spoken to counterparts across the Gulf states, Iran and Israel and other countries. PTI

tacking civilian infrastructure “across the region”.

“Recent attacks against energy installations in different locations across this region are deeply disturbing and only serve to further destabilise an already uncertain energy scenario for the whole world,” the Ministry of External Affairs’ official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Thursday.

Speaking to Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar, Mr. Modi said India stands in solidarity with Qatar, that suffered major losses from the Iranian strikes on the Ras Laffan gas facility, and

“strongly condemns the attacks on the region’s energy infrastructure”.

In a flurry of telephone calls, the Prime Minister also spoke to the leaders of Jordan, Malaysia and Oman. Since February 28, Mr. Modi has spoken to his counterparts across the Gulf states, Iran, and Israel, and a number of other leaders, and also with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Mr. Jaishankar met with UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy, and spoke to Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar over the telephone. India has also

been engaging all leaders of the BRICS grouping that it is chairing this year, although it has not been able to craft a consensus statement due to differences between Iran and the UAE, which are both members.

The lack of a statement from BRICS is in contrast to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) grouping, which includes Iran but not the UAE. The SCO issued a statement on March 2 condemning the strikes on Iran as well as the ensuing conflict.

“BRICS membership and SCO membership are two different categories. If you look at the members, you will get an answer as to why we are having issues in forming a consensus,” Mr. Jaiswal said, in response to a question from *The Hindu*.

In his phone calls on Thursday, Mr. Modi said he had called for a return to “dialogue and diplomacy”. Referring to the call with Mr. Macron, he said: “We look forward to continuing our close coordination to advance peace and stability in the region and beyond.”

Unfenced border with Myanmar in focus after arrest of seven foreigners

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

Amid the recent arrest of seven foreign nationals, including six Ukrainians and a U.S. citizen, who allegedly crossed illegally into Myanmar via Mizoram to train armed ethnic groups in weapons handling and drone operations, data show that 43 km of the total 1,643 km border with Myanmar has been fenced so far.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has accused the foreigners of importing drones from Europe to Myanmar via India for the use of ethnically armed groups (EAGs) in the country. The government recently informed a parliamentary panel that to check illegal migration, trafficking and insurgent activities along the Myan-



The fencing project will include gates that record biometrics and photographs of people who cross the border. FILE PHOTO

mar border, “coordination with local communities, Myanmar Army and associated security agencies is maintained” and a “joint counter-drone mechanism with monthly reporting has also been instituted”.

The fencing project, which includes installation of gates that record biometrics and photographs of people who cross the border, has faced resis-

tance as people on either side share deep ethnic, social and cultural ties.

As many as 43 designated exit and entry gates were proposed to regulate the movement of people and biometrics and gate passes were introduced.

However, over the past two years, the number of gates has declined to 38 and only 20 are now functional, a government

source said.

According to latest data provided by the Ministry to a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs, of the total 1,643 km of fencing approved by the government, 390.39 km has been sanctioned and only 43.75 km of fencing has been completed so far; 346.64 km is currently under construction.

India and Myanmar share an unfenced border and have a unique arrangement called the Free Movement Regime (FMR). While Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced in February 2024 that the FMR was being scrapped, it was only regulated and free movement of people – without visas and passports on either side of the unfenced border – was restricted to 10 km from the earlier 16 km.

FTA negotiations with Israel, GCC countries may be delayed

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

NEW DELHI

The ongoing conflict in West Asia is going to create delays in India's negotiations on free trade agreements (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries as well as Israel, a senior official in the Commerce Ministry said.

The FTA with the U.K., however, could be implemented by May 1, and the pact with the European Union could be ratified by the European Parliament by the end of November, the official added.

“There are several impacts of the war in West

Free trade agreement with the U.K. could be implemented by May 1, said a senior official in the Commerce Ministry

Asia, but one of them is that our talks with the GCCs and Israel will be delayed, since most of the parties involved are at war currently,” the official explained, declining to be named as the matter is still under discussion.

FTA talks with the GCC countries – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United

Arab Emirates – were launched on February 24.

The same month, between February 23-26, India and Israel also held the first round of negotiations for a bilateral FTA.

“The implementation of the U.K. FTA should happen by end-April, and we might decide to announce it on May 1,” the official said, adding that India was looking for a “significant date” to announce it, and that International Labour Day was a good and early candidate.

The India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement was signed on July 24, 2025.

Israel won't hit key Iran gas facility again: Trump

President distances the U.S. from Israeli strike on gas field in Iran's South Pars, one of the largest in the world, after Iran launches missiles at energy facilities in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Israel

Stanly Johnny

Distancing himself from an Israeli strike on Iran's South Pars gas field, U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday said Tel Aviv would not target the "extremely important and valuable" site again and warned Tehran against attacking Qatar's energy facilities.

His remarks came after Iran launched missile attacks at energy facilities in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Israel, following Israeli air strikes that caused a fire at South Pars in Iran's southern Bushehr province, one of the largest known gas fields in the world.

"Israel, out of anger for what has taken place in the Middle East, has violently



Mourners at the funeral procession of Iran's national security chief Ali Larijani and Basij commander Gholamreza Soleimani. AFP

lashed out at South Pars Gas Field in Iran. A relatively small section of the whole has been hit. The United States knew nothing about this particular attack, and the country of Qatar was in no way, shape, or form, involved with it, nor did it have any

idea that it was going to happen," Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post.

'Iran didn't know this'
"Unfortunately, Iran did not know this, or any of the pertinent facts pertaining to the South Pars attack, and unjustifiably and un-

fairly attacked a portion of Qatar's LNG Gas facility," he added. "No more attacks will be made by Israel pertaining to this extremely important and valuable South Pars Field unless Iran unwisely decides to attack a very innocent, in this case, Qatar - In which instance the United States will massively blow up the entirety of the South Pars Gas Field."

Israeli media reported that an oil refinery in the northern port city of Haifa was hit. Saudi Arabia's Defence Ministry said a drone crashed into the Samref refinery in the Red Sea port of Yanbu. In Kuwait, drone attacks sparked fires at the Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi refineries.

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Iran may let more Indian vessels pass Hormuz Strait

M. Kalyanaraman
Suhasini Haidar

Iran is putting together an approval process for allowing safe passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz, according to Lloyd's List Intelligence (LLI), a maritime data and intelligence company.

India, which has been in direct talks with Tehran, has earmarked 22 India-bound vessels for evacuation, including 20 ships which are assessed as critical to the country's energy security.

On Iran's watch

Richard Meade, the editor-in-chief of Lloyd's List Intelligence, told *The Hindu* that an LPG carrier took "an unusual route" by travelling through Iran's territorial waters before exiting the strait.

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Israel won't hit Iran gas facility again: Trump

The UAE suspended operations at Abu Dhabi's Habshan gas facility after authorities said debris of intercepted missiles fell on the site. The Bab oil field in the Emirate was also targeted by Iranian projectiles.

Qatar's state-run energy firm Qatar Energy said on Wednesday that its Ras Laffan Industrial City, one of the most critical energy hubs in the world which handles roughly 20% of the global LNG exports, came under attack. On Thursday, it said several of the company's LNG facilities were hit by Iranian missiles, causing "extensive damage".

Meanwhile, American media quoted Israeli officials as saying that the U.S. was informed in advance about the South Pars strike. South Pars is part of an offshore gas reservoir in the Persian Gulf shared by Qatar and Iran. Iran on Wednesday evening said it targeted energy facilities in Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Israel after several phases at South Pars came under attack.

The Iranian attacks "constitute a dangerous escalation and a violation of international law", the UAE's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "The UAE reserves its full right to take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty and national security, and to safeguard its national interests." The Foreign Ministry of Qatar declared "the military attaché and the security attaché at the [Iranian] embassy [in Doha], in addition to the staff of the two attaché offices 'persona non grata'," and asked them to leave the country within 24 hours.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said the kingdom reserves the right to take military actions "if deemed necessary" in response to the Iranian attacks. "What little trust there was before has completely been shattered... We're going to use every lever we have... to get these attacks to stop," he said.

Later in the day, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi signalled that Iran was ready for restraint but threatened to escalate if its energy facilities were attacked again.

'U.S. may 'unsanction' Iran oil already being shipped'

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Thursday that Washington might "unsanction" Iranian oil that is already being shipped, as energy prices soar due to the war in the West Asia.

Mr. Bessent's comments to *Fox Business* came as oil and gas prices made a renewed surge after Iran hit the world's biggest liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility in Qatar and threatened to destroy the region's energy infrastructure.

Mr. Bessent added in the interview that the U.S. government could also release more oil from its strategic reserves.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has been scrambling to rein in rocketing energy costs after U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28. Tehran's retaliation brought commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz to a virtual halt, snarling energy supply chains.

Recently, the United



Scott Bessent

States also temporarily allowed the sale of sanctioned Russian oil that is at sea. On Wednesday, Mr. Trump temporarily waived a century-old maritime shipping law in an attempt to help ease energy prices.

Soaring debt

The national debt surpassed a record \$39 trillion on Wednesday, a milestone that comes just weeks into the U.S.-Israeli war in Iran.

The unprecedented figure highlights competing administration priorities, from passing a massive tax law and boosting defence spending and immigration enforcement to chipping away at the debt itself – the latter of which Mr. Trump promised to do as both a

candidate and as President. The Government Accountability Office outlines some of the impact of rising government debt on Americans – including higher borrowing costs for things like mortgages and cars, lower wages from businesses having less money available to invest, and more expensive goods and services. Advocates for a balanced budget also warn that the long-term trend of borrowing more and paying more in interest will force Americans to face tougher fiscal tradeoffs ahead.

Michael Peterson, chair and CEO of the non-profit Peter G. Peterson Foundation, created to raise awareness of America's long-term fiscal challenges, said in a statement that "we must recognise this alarming rate of growth and the significant financial burden we are putting on the next generation."

White House economic adviser Kevin Hassett estimated that the war in Iran had cost the U.S. more than \$12 billion so far.

(With AP inputs)

Iran missile fire kills three Palestinians in West Bank

Agence France-Presse

JERUSALEM

Iranian missile attacks have killed three Palestinian women in the occupied West Bank and a foreign worker in central Israel, medics said on Thursday.

Falling shrapnel struck a hair salon in the West Bank town of Beit Awa near Hebron late Wednesday, killing the three women, according to the Palestine Red Crescent Society, marking the first Palestinian deaths from Iranian attacks in the ongoing West Asia war.

The victims include 17-year-old Mays Ghazi Masalmeh, according to the official Palestinian news agency, *Wafa*. The Red Crescent said at least eight others were wounded, including one woman in critical condition.

A short while later, Israeli medics said Iranian missile fire had killed a man in central Israel, bringing the death toll in Israel from attacks during the ongoing war to 15.

IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY Guards say they attacked and 'damaged' a US F-35 fighter jet. The US military said the pilot was in stable condition.

A SENIOR Russian official called on Thursday for the creation of a safety zone around Iran's Russian-built Bushehr nuclear plant to prevent a major disaster.

THE UNITED States has carried out strikes against Iran-aligned militia groups in Iraq. General Dan Caine, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, said.

QatarEnergy: Iran attack wipes out 17% of LNG export capacity for 5 yrs

Maha El Dahan, Andrew Mills & Yousef Saba
Dubai, Doha, March 19

IRANIAN ATTACKS have knocked out 17% of Qatar's liquefied natural gas (LNG) export capacity, causing an estimated \$20 billion in lost annual revenue and threatening supplies to Europe and Asia, QatarEnergy's CEO told Reuters on Thursday. Saad al-Kaabi said two of Qatar's 14 LNG trains and one of its two gas-to-liquids (GTL) facilities were damaged in the unprecedented strikes.

The repairs will sideline 12.8 million tons per year of LNG for three to five years, he said in an interview. "I never in my wildest dreams would have thought that Qatar would be — Qatar and the region — under such an attack, especially from a brotherly Muslim country in the month of Ramadan, attacking us in this way," said Kaabi, who is also Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs. State-owned QatarEnergy will have



A man inspects the site of an Iranian missile strike in Petah Tikva, Israel on Wednesday. AP

to declare force majeure on long-term contracts for up to five years for LNG supplies bound for Italy, Belgium, South Korea and China due to the two damaged trains, Kaabi said.

"I mean, these are long-term contracts that we have to declare force majeure. We already declared, but that was a shorter term. Now it's whatever the period is," he said.

"For production to restart, first we need hostilities to cease," he said.

US oil major ExxonMobil is a partner in the damaged LNG facilities, while Shell is a partner in the damaged GTL facility, which will take up to a year to repair. Texas-based ExxonMobil holds a 34% stake in LNG train S4 and a 30% stake in train S6, Kaabi said.

Bessent: US may remove sanctions on Iranian oil stranded on water

Reuters
Washington, March 19

THE US may soon remove sanctions from Iranian oil that is stranded on tankers to help lift global supplies and reduce prices, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Thursday.

"In the coming days, we may unsanction the Iranian oil that's on the water. It's about 140 million barrels," Bessent told Fox Business Network's "Mornings with Maria" program.

"So, depending on how you count it, that's 10 days to two weeks of supply," he added. Bessent said the addition of sanctioned Iranian oil into global supplies would help keep oil prices down for the next 10 to 14 days. Oil prices have been



US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent

above \$100 per barrel for much of the past two weeks as Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz to shipping and has attacked tankers.

The US Treasury recently took a similar step to allow the sale of sanctioned Russian oil stranded in tankers, which the Treasury said added 130 million barrels to global supplies.

Bessent said the US would take other actions to increase supply, including a unilateral release of stocks from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve above last week's coordinated joint G7 release of 400 million barrels.

Ras Laffan attack deepens India's worries over LNG

The Ras Laffan hit is of particular significance, not just for global LNG flows but also for India, which is grappling with an LPG supply crisis



SUKALP SHARMA & ANIL SASI

HOURS AFTER Israel hit South Pars, the world's largest natural gas field located in the Persian Gulf and shared between Iran and Qatar, Iranian missiles Thursday struck the world's biggest liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility in Qatar's Ras Laffan Industrial City.

While this is not the first time energy infrastructure has been targeted in the West Asia war by either side, the scale of the recent attacks marks a major escalation and increases the risk of a prolonged supply disruption. Consequently, the price of international oil benchmark Brent, which was already at a little over \$100 per barrel this week, briefly breached the \$119 level on Thursday before dropping to around \$112 by evening. The price is now around 50% higher than pre-war levels. Natural gas prices also shot up significantly.

After the South Pars attack, Iran warned that it would target facilities in the region. Sure enough, it struck Saudi Arabia's Samref refinery in the Red Sea port city of Yanbu and energy infrastructure in Kuwait, besides Qatar's Ras Laffan.

While the extent of damage to Ras Laffan is not yet known, the strikes have significant escalatory implications. One, it is now unclear how much time it will take for gas output from these facilities to return to normal, even if the war stops. Two, the concerns have moved upstream from the transit pathway to the production and supply side.

Notably, US President Donald Trump said that Washington did not have advance knowledge of the Israeli attack on the South Pars gas field, and Qatar was not involved either. Trump even declared that Israel will no longer attack South Pars unless Iran attacks "a very innocent" Qatar. But he also warned Iran that if it attacked Qatar's LNG facilities, the US would "blow up the entirety" of the South Pars gas field.

Why Ras Laffan strike matters

The Ras Laffan hit is of particular significance, not just for global LNG flows but also for India, QatarEnergy's primary LNG



production units, liquefaction plants, and export infrastructure are all concentrated in Ras Laffan, accounting for roughly a fifth of global LNG supply.

Qatar had already suspended LNG production at the facility following an attack — evidently smaller in scale than the recent strikes — earlier this month. Experts had expected LNG flows from Ras Laffan to be reinstated swiftly once the war ended. Still, with extensive damage from the latest strikes now being reported, it remains unclear how long it will take for LNG supplies to normalise.

A statement from QatarEnergy said Ras Laffan was targeted with missiles, "causing sizable fires" and "extensive" damage. There have been no reports of any injuries, given that the facility was evacuated after Iran's retaliation threat.

"In addition to the previous attack on Ras Laffan Industrial City on Wednesday 18 March 2026 that resulted in extensive damage to the Pearl GTL (Gas-to-Liquids) facility, QatarEnergy confirms that in the early hours of Thursday 19 March 2026, several of its Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facilities were the subject of missile attacks, causing sizable fires and extensive further damage. Emergency response teams were deployed immediately to contain the re-

sulting damage with no reported casualties," QatarEnergy said on Thursday.

India's LNG dependency

Qatar is India's largest source of LNG. India depends on LNG imports to meet roughly half of its natural gas demand. More than two-fifths of the country's LNG comes from Qatar — almost all of it from Ras Laffan.

According to Commerce Ministry data, India imported 27 million tonnes of LNG in 2024-25, of which 11.2 million tonnes, or 41.4%, came from Qatar. QatarEnergy has an LNG production capacity of 77 million tonnes per annum, which is under expansion. In 2025, QatarEnergy exported around 81 million tonnes of LNG.

With LNG from Qatar and other sources in West Asia unable to reach India due to the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz and a production suspension by QatarEnergy, India had already cut natural gas supplies to certain industries.

Beyond LNG, India, like many other countries that rely on West Asia for a large share of their energy imports, would be extremely worried about the prospect of an escalation in attacks on critical energy infrastructure.

So far, the disruption from the conflict

Energy dependence

Qatar is India's largest source of LNG. India depends on LNG imports to meet roughly half of its natural gas demand

More than two-fifths of the country's LNG comes from Qatar — almost all of it from Ras Laffan

has largely been a supply chain problem, stemming from the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, as numerous tankers carrying energy supplies are stuck in the Persian Gulf, with only a few managing to trickle out.

But if major oil production and next infrastructure get badly hit in the next phase of this conflict, it will become a real supply crisis.

Overall, India depends on imports to meet over 88% of its crude oil requirement, 60% of its LPG needs, and around 50% of its natural gas requirement.

For a large share of these energy imports, India depends on West Asia, from which they primarily come to India through the Strait of Hormuz. Around 2.5-2.7 million bpd of India's crude imports — accounting for about half of the country's total oil imports — have transited the Strait in recent months; the longer-term average is about 40%. This oil is mainly from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait. India doesn't buy Iranian oil due to American sanctions on Tehran.

India's dependence on the Strait for LNG and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) supplies is greater than for crude. Roughly 60% of India's LNG imports come through the Strait of Hormuz, the figure is a staggering 90% for LPG, as evidenced by the LPG supply crisis the country is already grappling with.

Trump's statement

Following the attacks, Trump said in a seemingly passive-aggressive social media post that the US "knew nothing" about the Israeli attack. Qatar was not involved in it, and Iran "did not know this" and attacked a part of Qatar's LNG facility.

At least part of the post appeared descalatory on targeting of critical energy infrastructure in West Asia. But the extent of Trump's control over Israel's actions, this conflict, and how it proceeds hereon is anybody's guess.

"I think the US has now lost the initiative — both offensively as well as toward peace; they'll tag along with Israel and try and find an exit once they've hammered Iran some more. The Israelis will keep going, Iran, unfortunately, seems to be heading toward something like the worst-case scenario... (It is) difficult to see normalcy in the sense of what we had before 28 February," an energy sector analyst said.

LONDON

'Russian tanker shipping more than seven lakh barrels of oil to Cuba'



REUTERS

▲ A sanctioned Russian tanker is shipping more than seven lakh barrels of oil to Cuba as the communist island suffers blackouts under a U.S. economic blockade, marine trackers indicated on Wednesday. The *Anatoly Kolodkin* loaded 7,30,000 barrels of crude from Russia and was bound for Cuba, Kpler said. AFP

WASHINGTON

U.S. approves over \$16 bn in arms sales to Gulf states hit by Iran war



AP

▲ The United States on Thursday announced the approval of \$16.46 billion in military sales to the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, two Gulf states that have been hit hard by fallout from the Iran war. The UAE also received approval to buy systems designed to defeat small, unmanned aircraft for \$2.1 billion. AFP

SHOT IN THE ARM

Hosting World Indoor C'ships a stepping stone to Olympic dream

India will also stage 2030 CWG and other big sporting events to enhance credentials as host of big events

Nihal Koshie
New Delhi, March 19

FIVE MONTHS ago, in a boost to its aspirations of staging the 2036 Olympics, India were named hosts for the centenary Commonwealth Games to be held in Ahmedabad. Thursday marked another win for India when World Athletics president Sebastian Coe named Bhubaneswar as the host city for the 2028 edition of the World Indoor Championships.

While India's Summer Games' bid will go up against Qatar, the hosts of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, hosting the CWG in Ahmedabad and the World Indoors in Bhubaneswar will be an opportunity to enhance credentials as hosts of big-ticket events.

The bid to host the indoor championships was submitted by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) and got the go-ahead from the World Athletics Council during a media briefing ahead of the 2026 championships, which begins in Torun, Poland, on Friday.

Members of the World Athletics Council inspected Bhubaneswar's Kalinga Indoor Stadium, the country's only indoor competition facility which was completed in March 2024.

The AFI has also bid for the 2028 Asian Indoor Championships as well as next year's Asian Relay Championships.

Chandigarh is the proposed venue for the relay championships. A delegation of the Asian Athletics Association visited Bhubaneswar to review the Kalinga Indoor Stadium in the first week of March.

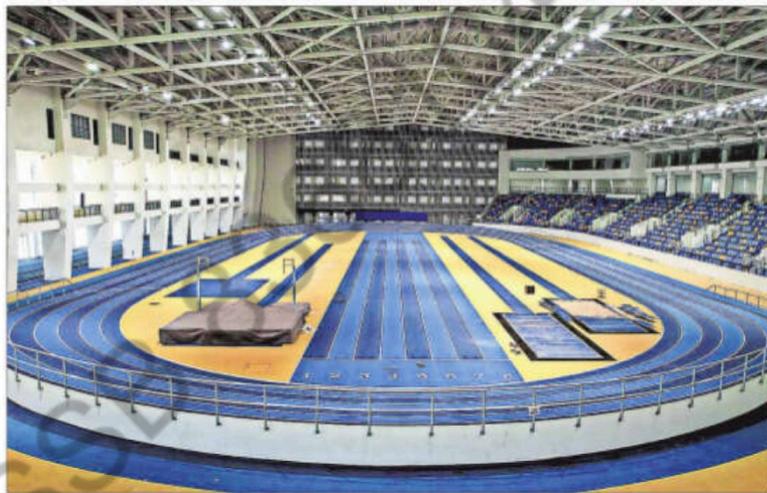
"All major championships that come to India prior to the Olympics help India to get ready to host the Olympics and help Indian athletes get more exposure by competing against some of the best in the world. India is capable of hosting the Olympics, but these events will show that we are ready," Anju Bobby George, the senior vice-president of the AFI, told this paper.

Sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya posted on X: "The world is coming to India! Delighted to learn that Bhubaneswar, Odisha will host the 2028 World Athletics Indoor Championships."

Bhubaneswar has hosted major track and field events earlier. The 2017 Asian Athletics Championships was also held at the Kalinga Stadium as was the World Athletics Continental Tour Bronze Level Competition last year. "Indian athletes have been making a good impression at the global level," AFI president Bahadur Singh Sagoo said in a statement.

Bigger picture

Bagging the hosting rights of the World Indoors is part of



Completed in 2024, Kalinga Indoor Athletics Stadium is the first such facility in the country. SPORTS ODISHA

India's plan to conduct a slew of international multi-disciplinary events and major continental tournaments across Olympic sports. An Indian delegation which met the top brass of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Lausanne in July confirmed that Ahmedabad is the country's choice to stage 'a future edition' of the Olympics.

The Veer Savarkar Sports complex in Naranpura, built at a cost of Rs 820 crore, is proposed as one of the venues for the 2030 Commonwealth Games, along with the under-construction Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave, which will also house the existing Narendra Modi cricket stadium.

Before hosting the Asian

Aquatics Championships in September last year, the Savarkar Sports Complex was the venue for the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships in August. In the Gujarat state budget presented last month, Rs 500 crore was allotted to make Ahmedabad an Olympic-ready city.

Quest for 2036

Qatar announced its bid for the 2036 Olympics in July last year. India will also face competition from Turkey, Indonesia, Hungary and Germany, which wants to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Apart from hosting the FIFA World Cup four years ago, Qatar hosted the Asian Games in 2006. The 2030 edition of the Asiad will also be

held in that country.

In December 2024, Coe - who had thrown his hat in the ring to become IOC president - had said that successful staging of major events can help India 'demonstrate a track record of sporting delivery at the international level' which will be helpful for the country in its quest to become the 2036 Summer Games host.

"First of all, I am very grateful to Indian athletics that they are showing the ambition to stage more of our events. I think if any country has Olympic ambitions, I certainly know India does, being able to demonstrate a track record of sporting delivery at the international level can only be helpful," Coe, a two-time Olympic 1500m champion, had said.