

# NDA will remove hurdles before women's quota: PM

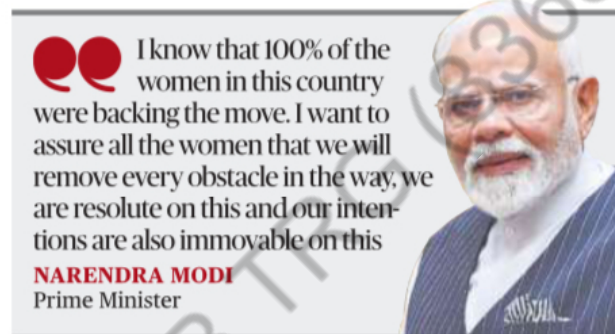
Modi launches sharp attack on Opposition, says reservation was need of the hour; women won't forgive 'attack on dignity', will give these parties a fitting response for denial of rights, he adds

**Nistula Hebbar**

NEW DELHI

**A** day after the government failed to secure passage of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, which sought to redistribute Lok Sabha seats on the basis of the 2011 Census to expedite the implementation of women's reservation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the National Democratic Alliance remained committed to removing all obstacles to the move.

Addressing the nation on Saturday, Mr. Modi launched a sharp attack on the Opposition, accusing it of "committing a foeticide of the idea of women's representation before the whole world, via their opposition to the move". He said while the NDA could not muster the "66% sup-



port" in the Lok Sabha for operationalising women's reservation on Friday, it had the backing of women across the country.

"I know that 100% of women in this country were backing the move. I seek forgiveness from all women of the country. I want to assure them that we will remove every obstacle in the way. We are resolute on this, and our intentions are also immovable," he said. In his 30-minute speech, he criticised

Opposition parties, including the Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Trinamool Congress, and Samajwadi Party.

"When the Constitutional Amendment Bill fell in the Lok Sabha, these parties appeared elated and were thumping their desks. It was not an expression of joy, but an attack on the dignity and self-respect of every woman in the country," he said.

He termed the Bills introduced by the Centre the

## Opposition flays Modi's address

NEW DELHI

Opposition parties slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech, with Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge alleging that he violated the Model Code of Conduct. » [PAGE 6](#)

"need of the hour" and that he had himself assured the Lok Sabha that representation of all States would increase proportionately in the Lower House. "Our mothers and sisters across the country have seen this, and they will give such parties a fitting response for the denial of their rights," he said.

**CONTINUED ON**

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# **'NDA will remove the hurdles before quota'**

“I wanted to tell these parties that they are taking women’s power for granted and that they will face the consequences of it. Women can forgive a lot, but not an attack on their dignity and self-respect,” he added.

“Many of these parties are dynastic, and they apprehend that our mothers and sisters who are in their thousands in panchayats and local bodies would take their share of power, edging them and their families out,” he said.

“The Congress has opposed all manner of reform ranging from the Goods and Service Tax (GST) reforms, to digital payment architecture, reservations for the poor among the general category, to triple talaq, the Uniform Civil Code, reforms in the Waqf Board and even measures to give relief to refugees under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA),” he said. He termed it a legacy of the Congress’s adoption of the divide-and-rule policy of the British.

# Why was quota law in cold storage, asks Opposition after PM's address

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders sharply criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation, with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleging that he violated the Model Code of Conduct by using official machinery to attack political opponents ahead of the Assembly election in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot dared Mr. Modi to seek a fresh mandate, escalating the political confrontation over the Centre's legislative agenda and its timing.

In a post on X, Mr. Kharge accused the Prime Minister of turning an official address into a partisan speech. He said Mr. Modi, "with nothing meaningful

to show for the last 12 years", resorted to "mud-slinging and outright lies" despite the Model Code of Conduct being in force. Calling it a "travesty of democracy", he alleged that Mr. Modi misused official machinery to target the Opposition.

"Modiji mentioned Congress 59 times and women barely few times. That tells the country everything about his priorities. Women are not the BJP's priority," Mr. Kharge said.

He reiterated that the Congress had consistently supported women's reservation, recalling the passage of the legislation in the Rajya Sabha in 2010 and backing the subsequent law in 2023. He criticised the delay in notifying the law and urged the government to implement

33% reservation within the existing Lok Sabha framework, instead of linking it to delimitation and census exercises.

The Congress chief further accused the government of conflating the women's reservation law with the recent Constitution amendment Bills related to delimitation, alleging that the latter were intended to redraw the electoral map in a manner beneficial to the ruling party.

Echoing similar concerns, Mr. Gehlot said, "Today, Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi said that women would give a strong reply and teach a lesson to the Congress and other Opposition parties. If he is so confident about this, then he should dissolve the Lok Sabha and call for fresh elections on this very

issue, seeking a new mandate from the people".

**Seeks apology**

CPI(M) leader John Brittas also demanded an apology from Mr. Modi, alleging that the women's reservation law had been kept in "cold storage".

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said a Prime Minister's address to the nation should be non-partisan and aimed at building confidence, but Mr. Modi's speech was a "partisan and polemical attack". "What he should

have apologised for is his shameless, deceitful attempts to push through a devious delimitation proposal in the name of women. His *niyat* [intention] is anything but *saaf* [clean]. It is poisonous," Mr. Ramesh said.

# ‘Centre’s conspiracy to permanently stay in power thwarted’

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The defeat of the Constitution Amendment Bill linked to women’s reservation in the Lok Sabha marks a significant victory for democracy, federalism, and Opposition unity, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said at a press meet on Saturday.

The Centre’s move was a “conspiracy to permanently stay in power” and alter the federal structure “in the garb of women’s reservation”, Ms. Gandhi alleged, but these attempts had been thwarted by a united Opposition, she said.

She maintained that the Opposition was not opposed to women’s reservation, and would support the implementation of the



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

Women’s Reservation Act, 2023 on the current strength of the Lok Sabha.

“They thought that if the Bill passes, it is fine. If it fails, we will project the Opposition as anti-women and become the messiah of women. But it is not easy to become the messiah of women. We saw what happened to women in Hathras, [and] what happened to our Olympic medallists and others,” she said.

# Opp now plans to move fresh notice seeking CEC's removal

Press Trust of India  
New Delhi, April 18

UNDETERRED BY the rejection of their earlier notices, Opposition parties are planning a fresh move to seek removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, sources said on Saturday.

According to highly placed sources, leaders from several Opposition parties are in talks, and at least five senior MPs from different parties — including Congress, TMC, SP and DMK — are working on drafting a new notice to initiate removal proceedings.

It has, however, not yet been decided which House the notice would be moved in, or whether it would be introduced in both Houses as was done last time, the source added.

Following the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 in Lok Sabha on Friday, Opposition leaders are aiming to secure more MPs' signatures on the notice and are looking at garnering at least 200, the source said.

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"We want to make a statement. We first need to prove that the number last time was underestimated," the source added. In its earlier notices, the Opposition had accused CEC Kumar of a "failure to maintain independence and constitutional fidelity" and of acting under the "thumb of the executive".

The notices levelled sweeping charges against the CEC, alleging "proved misbehaviour" on grounds including a compromised and executive-influenced appointment, partisan functioning — such as the alleged "graded response" doctrine targeting Opposition leaders — obstruction of electoral fraud investigations, and erosion of transparency

through refusal to share data and materials.

They further accused him of enabling large-scale disenfranchisement via SIR exercises in Bihar and elsewhere, defying or delaying compliance with Supreme Court directions, and acting in alignment with the political executive, thereby undermining the independence of the Election Commission.

However, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan rejected the notices, holding that even if the allegations were assumed to be true, they did not meet the high constitutional threshold of "misbehaviour" required for removal.

They reasoned that appointment-related issues or prior government service do not constitute misconduct; differences in public statements or administrative decisions lack evidence of wilful abuse of authority; and actions like data-sharing or electoral roll revisions fall within the commission's constitutional mandate and are subject to judicial review.

# Two killed in an ambush on vehicles on Manipur highway

Police say suspected extremists fired at convoy in Ukhrul; two Tangkhul Naga men killed in attack; Naga organisation blames Kuki armed groups; CM says govt. is ready to hand over probe to NIA

**Rahul Karmakar**  
GUWAHATI

**S**uspected extremists ambushed the vehicles of civilians on National Highway no. 202 in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Saturday, killing two Tangkhul Naga men, one a retired soldier.

The attack occurred at 2.35 p.m near Yaolen Kuki village, about 4 km from Litan on the highway linking Ukhrul town and Imphal. Tension has been prevailing in the Litan area since February 7, when a localised fight snowballed into a conflict between the Kuki and Tangkhul Naga communities.

The attack came a day after Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh met villagers along the highway as part of a mission to "remove the trust deficit" between the Kukis and Tangkhuls.

The deceased were identified as 45-year-old Chinaoshang Shokwungnao, who served in the Army's Naga Regiment, and 42-year-old Yaruingam Vashum. Both hailed from Ukhrul.

The local police said bullets hit six vehicles



Protest at Jantar Mantar in solidarity with Manipur victims, seeking justice for attacked civilians and children. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

when unidentified extremists opened fire on a convoy of vehicles travelling towards Ukhrul from Imphal.

A district official said the State government started providing security escorts to civilian vehicles between Mahadev and an area beyond Litan, given the intermittent violence between the two communities. "The incident was reported from beyond the stretch where escorts are provided. We believe snipers could have shot the passengers with long-range rifles," he said.

The Working Committee of Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL), the apex social body of the community, said

members of the Kuki armed groups were involved in the attack. "...Ever since the conflict between Tangkhul Nagas and Kukis started in early February, Kuki militants have been openly attacking civilians in Litan, Laho, Sina-keithei, Sikibung, and Thawai," the TNL said in a statement.

It said women, children, and ailing persons were in the vehicles that came under the attack, "carried out as soon as the escort team returned toward Litan".

The TNL demanded that the government immediately undertake a combined operation at Yaolen and adjoining Kuki villages.

The Kuki-Zo Council, an apex community-based organisation, denied the involvement of Kuki individuals or groups in the incident. "It appears to be linked to prevailing tensions among certain factional groups, rather than the handiwork of any Kuki-Zo group. It is deeply regrettable that, without proper verification or credible evidence, blame is hastily attributed to the Kuki-Zo community," it said in a statement.

Condemning the ambush, the Chief Minister said the government would request the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to take over the case.

## Shutdown from today

Meanwhile, women's groups and civil society organisations in the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley announced a five-day State-wide shutdown from Sunday to protest the government's failure to arrest those involved in a recent bomb attack that claimed the lives of two children in Bishnupur district.

The organisations set April 25 as the deadline for authorities to arrest the minors' killers.

CRISIS DEEPENS AFTER IRAN GUARDS REVERSE STAND, WARN VESSELS IN REGION

# Iran shuts Hormuz again, fires at two Indian carriers; Delhi summons envoy

At least one Indian tanker transits strait, most vessels turn back

Sukalp Sharma & Shubhajit Roy  
New Delhi, April 18

DEEPENING THE crisis over the Strait of Hormuz, Iran Saturday reversed its stand on reopening the key waterway and its navy fired on passing vessels, two of them India-flagged carriers, according to maritime tracking data.

In New Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs summoned the Iranian envoy to lodge a protest over the targeting of Indian vessels, and conveyed "deep concern".

"The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in New Delhi was called in by the Ministry of External Affairs for a meeting with Foreign Secretary this evening. During the meeting, Foreign Secretary conveyed India's deep concern at the shooting incident earlier today involving two Indian-flagged ships in the Strait of Hormuz. He noted the importance that India attached to the

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Tankers anchored in the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Iran's Qeshm Island, Saturday. AP

## 'Strait of Hormuz closure economic terrorism... is impacting India too'

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SAEED BIN Mubarak Al Hajeri, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the UAE, says a ceasefire between US and Iran is not enough. Any sustainable resolution to the war, he says, must address Iran's full range of threats.

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EXPRESS interview

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**US and Iran have agreed on a ceasefire after 39 days of war and talks are on between the two sides, including on the reopening of Strait of Hormuz. How does UAE see these developments?**

The UAE is closely following the ceasefire announcement

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Govt nod for Rs 12,980-crore maritime insurance pool

Hankishan Sharma  
New Delhi, April 18

WITH GLOBAL shipping routes disrupted due to the West Asia conflict, the Centre Saturday announced the creation of a domestic insurance pool, Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool, with a sovereign guarantee of Rs 12,980 crore to facilitate continuous insurance coverage to all maritime risks including hull, machinery, cargo, protection, and indemnity (P&I) and war.

This was decided at a meeting of the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "A big factor of insurance, which the world understood during the West Asia conflict, is that insurers and reinsurers were not ready to insure the ships going to West Asia... In view of this, a decision has been taken to create a sovereign guarantee fund of Rs 12,980 crore to

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# Iran shuts Hormuz

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safety of merchant shipping and mariners and recalled that Iran had earlier facilitated the safe passage of several ships bound for India,” Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, said.

“Reiterating his concern at this serious incident of firing on merchant ships, Foreign Secretary urged the Ambassador to convey India’s views to the authorities in Iran and resume at the earliest the process of facilitating India-bound ships across the Strait. The Ambassador of Iran undertook to convey these views to the Iranian authorities,” he said.

With the naval arm of the Revolutionary Guards announcing the closure of the strait again — this was in retaliation over the US refusal to lift its blockade of the strait until Iran agreed to its terms a peace deal — there was confusion all around. A day earlier, Iran’s Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, citing the temporary truce between Israel and Tehran-backed Hezbollah, announced that the “passage of all commercial vessels through Strait of Hormuz is declared

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## **E.** EXPLAINED

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### Bargaining chip

The Strait of Hormuz is among the world’s most critical chokepoints for energy supplies, and accounts for a fifth of global oil and LNG flow. Iran’s ability to disrupt global trade and energy flow by closing the strait has proven to be its bargaining chip in the West Asia war.

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completely open for the remaining period of ceasefire”.

A number of merchant vessels, including a few India-flagged ships, turned back into the Persian Gulf after seemingly trying to cross the strait, as per ship tracking data. But a few vessels, including an Indian oil tanker *Desh Garima*, appeared to have successfully crossed the strait Saturday, the data shows.

With its transit through the strait, there are now 14 India-flagged vessels in the Persian Gulf.

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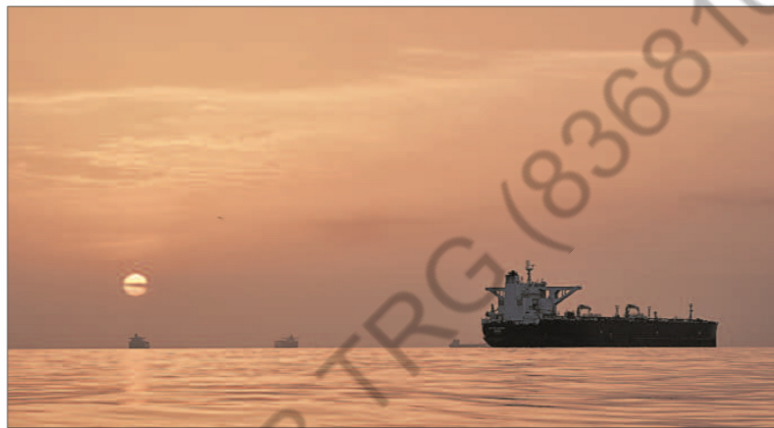
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# Insurance

facilitate maritime insurance. It will cover all maritime risks including hull, machinery, cargo, P&I and war. Vessels with the India flag will be covered under this.”

An official statement issued after the Cabinet meeting stated:

“The pool ensures that Indian trade continues to have access to affordable insurance for vessels carrying cargo from any international origin to Indian ports and vice-versa, even when transiting volatile maritime corridors.”

“With increased global volatility and geopolitical instability, maritime trade has been impacted with increased risk of losses for cargo and vessels resulting in increased insurance costs and uncertainty in continuous availability of insurance,” it stated. “Further, there is high dependence of Indian vessels on the International Group of Protection and Indemnity (IGP&I) Club for P&I insurance covering third-party liabilities like oil pollution liability, wreck removal, cargo damage, crew injury and repatriation, collision liabilities and so on. Accordingly, there was a need for a domestic maritime risk covering pool to maintain sovereignty and continuity of trade in face of withdrawal of coverage due to sanctions or due

to geopolitical tensions,” it said.

“The policies will be issued by insurers that are Pool members, using the combined underwriting capacity of the Pool, which would be around Rs 950 crore. The Pool will help to manage liability insurance locally, tailored to Indian shipping conditions and regulatory requirements, develop specialized marine underwriting, claims management and legal expertise within India,” it said.

“A Governing Body constituted for this pool would oversee the formation and functioning of the pool,” the statement said.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Kasturi Sengupta, Secretary General, General Insurance Council, said, “After the Strait of Hormuz was closed, all the foreign reinsurers had stopped giving war cover protection to general insurers. GIC Re, the Indian reinsurer, had continued their support on the treaty but in the facultative agreements that happened, all the foreign reinsurers had withdrawn the war cover – in marine cargo and in marine hull. Then there was a necessity of a sovereign guarantee and also the necessity for the Indian market to have their own pool so that if any claim comes as regards to war and allied risks in these high risk-areas (Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Aden and adjoining areas) they can be taken care of.”

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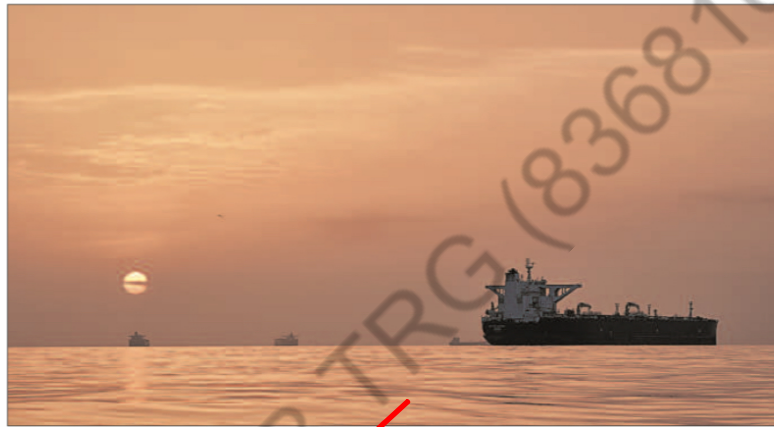
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# 'Economic terrorism'

and related talks. We are seeking further clarification on the ceasefire agreement's provisions to ensure that Iran demonstrates a full and verifiable commitment to an immediate cessation of all hostilities.

However, a ceasefire, on its own, is not enough. Any sustainable resolution to this war must address Iran's full range of threats: its nuclear capabilities, its ballistic missiles and drones, its affiliated proxies, and the complete and unconditional reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

On that last point, we should be clear-eyed in respect to the fact that the Strait remains closed. Access is being restricted, conditioned, and controlled. Iran is requiring ships to obtain permission to transit and is charging a toll per vessel. This does not just impact the UAE and its neighbours, it also impacts India, which depends on this corridor for a significant share of its crude oil, LPG, and fertilizer imports. Every day the

Strait remains closed, the cost to Indian households and businesses grows. That is not freedom of navigation, it is economic terrorism that must be addressed immediately by the international community.

The benchmark for success is not a pause in hostilities. It is a conclusive outcome, with binding guarantees, accountability, and assurances that this pattern of aggression can never be repeated.

## **How do you view the war in West Asia, where Iran was attacked by US and Israel?**

The UAE did not seek this conflict. In fact, we made every effort to prevent it. Before this war began, the UAE and other Gulf states made clear, through every available channel, that their territory and airspace would not be used to launch attacks against Iran. That assurance was given sincerely and in good faith. Iran chose to disregard it and strike the very coun-

# US extends sanction waiver on Russian oil, India set to benefit

Sukalp Sharma

New Delhi, April 18

BARELY TWO days after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said that the sanctions waiver for buying sanctioned Russian crude at sea won't be renewed, Washington has now made a U-turn and extended the waiver by nearly a month.

This decision by Washington is expected to help India continue buying Russian crude in large quantities amid the squeeze on supplies from West Asia. According to industry experts, the decision to extend the waiver likely came after pressure from countries buying Russian crude to partly offset the loss of Gulf barrels.

There is some hope that the disruption in West Asian energy supplies might ease a bit in the coming days amid a fragile peace between the US and Iran and indications that vessel movements through the Strait of Hormuz could rise going forward. But even then, it would take weeks and possibly months for energy cargo movements through the maritime chokepoint to pick up significantly and on a sustained basis.

Moreover, the damage to energy infrastructure in the region due to the war could keep production and supplies capped for much longer.

For major oil importers, the hunt for more non-West Asian barrels is expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

Had the Russian oil waiver not been extended, some adjustments and downward

pressure on India's oil imports from Russia were likely, even as Moscow was still expected to remain New Delhi's largest source of crude oil in the coming months, according to industry insiders and experts.

Without the waiver, Indian refiners wouldn't have been able to take deliveries of Russian crude on sanctioned tankers or deal with Russian oil suppliers sanctioned by Washington, as that would have exposed them to the risk of attracting secondary sanctions from the US.

India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 88% of its requirement.

## Washington's about-turn on Russian oil

According to a General License issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the US Department of the Treasury, Russian oil and petroleum products loaded on tankers, including sanctioned vessels, on or before 12:01 eastern daylight time (9:31 am India time) on April 17 can be purchased and received by most countries till May 16. The earlier waiver—issued in March—had expired on April 11.

Another sanctions waiver for Iranian oil is set to expire on April 19, and following the U-turn on the Russian waiver, it remains to be seen whether the US will do the same for Iranian oil as well. With global oil supplies hit due to the effective halt in vessel movements through the Strait of Hormuz



Critics, meanwhile, argue that the waiver is offering a windfall to Moscow, which is being used to fund its war in Ukraine. REUTERS

amid the West Asia war, these waivers were aimed at allowing more barrels of oil to reach the international market, thereby easing the supply situation and exert downward pressure on spiralling oil prices.

Experts saw these moves from Washington as part of Donald Trump administration's effort to prevent a further and sustained spike in international oil prices—and the consequent rise in domestic fuel prices in the US—given the midterm elections later this year. But the Russian oil waiver attracted criticism from various sections in the US.

Critics argued that it led to a windfall for Moscow, which would fund its war effort. Similar arguments were made

against the waiver for oil from Iran, with whom the US was locked in battle in West Asia. The sanctions waiver for Russian crude was first issued specifically for India in the first week of March, and was later extended to other countries.

## Move to benefit India

With the sanctions waiver for Russian crude now extended, India—one of the top two destinations for Russian crude—is a clear beneficiary. The earlier waiver had facilitated a rapid ramp-up of import of Moscow's oil by Indian refiners amid the major disruption in supplies from West Asia. Indian refiners were also able to secure some cargoes of Iranian oil, marking the first de-

## • HIDE & SEEK

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liveries of Tehran's crude to India in nearly seven years, although the volumes were insignificant when compared to imports of Russian crude.

Around 2.5–2.7 million barrels per day (bpd) of India's crude import have transited the strait in recent months.

The longer-term average is around 40%. Most of that supply is effectively offline due to the war. Industry experts said that the waiver indeed helped India. That is because Indian refiners were now able to take deliveries of Russian oil even on tankers sanctioned or blocked by the US, and could deal directly with sanctioned Russian companies.

TEHRAN: NO DATE SET FOR NEXT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH U.S.

# Iranian official says US 'maximalist' demands stalling face-to-face talks

Suzan Frazer  
Antalya, April 18

IRAN IS not yet ready to hold a new round of face-to-face talks with US officials, a senior Iranian official said Saturday, citing Washington's refusal to abandon "maximalist" demands on key issues.

In an interview with AP on the margins of a diplomacy forum in Turkey, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh also said his country will not hand over its enriched uranium to the United States, rejecting claims made by US President Donald Trump.

"I can tell you that no enriched material is going to be shipped to United States," Khatibzadeh said. "This is non-starter and I can assure you that while we are ready to address any concerns that we do have, we're not going to accept things that are nonstarters."

On Friday, Trump said that the US will go into Iran and "get all the nuclear dust," referring to the 970 pounds of enriched uranium believed to be buried under nuclear sites badly damaged by US military strikes last year.

Khatibzadeh said there have been many exchanges of messages between the sides but accused the United States of



A boat sails past a tanker anchored on the Strait of Hormuz off the Qeshm island coast on Saturday. AP

holding firm on demands Iran deems to be excessive.

"We are still not there yet to move on to an actual meeting because there are issues that the Americans have not yet abandoned their maximalist position," Khatibzadeh said.

Iran was seeking the finalisation of a "framework agreement" before moving to an in-person meeting, he added.

The Iranian official would not go into specifics of the negotiations with the United States or say which issues remain unresolved but called on

Washington to address Iran's concerns, including sanctions imposed on Iran.

"The other sides also should understand and address our main concerns, which are illegal unilateral sanctions that Americans have imposed on Iranians and this economic terrorism which has targeted Iranian people to suffocate them and make them to revolt against the political structure inside Iran," Khatibzadeh said.

Asked whether Iran would respond to renewed attacks by

Israel on Lebanon despite the ceasefire, Khatibzadeh said: "Iran has no option, just to stop aggressors once and forever."

Trump said that Israel is "prohibited" by the US from further strikes on Lebanon and that "enough is enough" in the Israel-Hezbollah war. The State Department said the prohibition applies only to offensive attacks and not to actions taken in self-defence.

The Iranian official renewed Iran's position that Tehran's actions were defensive and in response to nonpro-

## E. EXPLAINED

### Demands made by US negotiators

President Trump insists Iran surrender enriched uranium, describing plans to "get all the nuclear dust." He demands strict controls, threatens renewed military action and a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz if no agreement is reached, rejecting partial compromises.

oked aggression occurring in the middle of negotiations.

He also reiterated Iran's position that the ceasefire must extend to Lebanon, where Israel had been fighting with the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah.

When the US and Iran declared a temporary truce last week, Pakistan and Iran said it extended to Lebanon, but Israel — and later the US — denied this.

Israel then launched a series of airstrikes on central Beirut, prompting Iran to announce it was once again closing the Strait of Hormuz. Following implementation of a truce in Lebanon Friday, Iran said it had reopened the strait. AP

# Israel 'sets up Yellow Line' in Lebanon

Agence France-Presse

JERUSALEM

The Israeli military said on Saturday it had established a "Yellow Line" demarcation in southern Lebanon, similar to the one separating its forces from territory still held by Hamas in Gaza, adding that it had already struck suspected militants approaching its troops along the line.

"Over the past 24 hours, IDF forces operating south of the Yellow Line in southern Lebanon identified terrorists who violated the ceasefire understandings

**Since a ceasefire came into effect in Gaza, the Palestinian territory has been split by 'Yellow Line'**

and approached the forces from north of the Yellow Line in a manner that posed an immediate threat," the military said, referring to such a line for the first time since a ceasefire came into effect.

"Immediately after identification and in order to eliminate the threat ... forces attacked the terro-

rists in several areas in southern Lebanon," it said, noting that the military was authorised to take action against threats, despite the ceasefire.

"Actions taken in self-defence and to remove immediate threats are not restricted by the ceasefire," the military said.

Since a ceasefire came into effect in Gaza on October 10, the Palestinian territory has been split by a "Yellow Line", the de facto boundary dividing Gaza into two zones: one under Israeli military control and one under Hamas control.

Israel and Lebanon agreed to a 10-day ceasefire on Thursday in order to negotiate an end to six weeks of war between Israel and the Iran-backed group Hezbollah. The war saw massive Israeli air strikes across Lebanon and also a ground invasion in the south.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said on Friday that "direct negotiations" with Israel "are crucial", and that the government aims to "consolidate a ceasefire, secure the withdrawal of Israeli forces, and address border disputes".

# Eight India-bound ships return after trying to cross strait

The government earmarked 22 ships carrying energy cargo to India for repatriation in coordination with Iranian agencies and Indian Navy

**M. Kalyanaraman**  
**Debayan Tewari**  
CHENNAI

**S**anmar Herald, fired at by Iranian forces, was among some seven Indian-flagged vessels that sought to cross the Strait of Hormuz on Friday-Saturday and returned to the Persian Gulf, as per [marinetraffic.com](http://marinetraffic.com).

Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) crude oil tanker Desh Garima, which went to Persian Gulf for drydock repairs, exited the strait, as per the tracker site.

Sanmar Herald, owned by Sanmar Shipping and chartered by IOC, was carrying some 2 million barrels crude. It had gone farthest into the strait and crossed Larak Island too.

Sanmar Group told *The Hindu* that Sanmar Herald suffered no damage. Another crude oil carrier Sanmar Suparna had gone for dry docking and is still in the Persian Gulf and has reported safe.

Desh Vibhor, owned by SCI and chartered by Reliance, carrying 2 million barrels of fuel oil and Kuwaiti crude, was another very large crude carrier that returned. It changed course from south of Hengam Island. Container ships CMA CGM Diamond and CMA CGM Manaus crossed Larak Island when they were rerouted to Persian Gulf. Oil tanker Desh



**On boil:** UKMTO sent out alerts on a tanker being fired upon by 'two gunboats linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. REUTERS

Suraksha returned from near south of Larak island. Jag Arnav, a bulk carrier owned by Great Eastern Shipping Corporation, also returned.

Marshall Island-flagged India-bound LPG tanker DV Sarv Shakti, returned from near Larak Island.

## Repatriation to India

The Indian government earmarked 22 ships carrying energy cargo to India for repatriation to the country. The exercise was carried out as per instructions and coordination by the government with Iranian agencies and involved Indian Navy as well.

Iran's Tasmin news agency reported the Supreme National Security Council "stressed Tehran will continue strict monitoring and control over the Strait of Hormuz until the U.S.-Israeli war of aggression fully ends."

On Friday, *AFP* quoted Jakob Larsen, chief security officer of BIMCO, a shipping association, as saying, "The status of mine threats in (Iran's maritime) traffic separation scheme is unclear. BIMCO believes shipping firms should consider avoiding the area."

## Fired upon

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) sent out alerts a tanker was fired upon by 'two gunboats linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guards' 20 nautical miles northeast of Oman. The captain said the gunboats fired without issuing a radio challenge adding crew was safe.

A container ship was hit by a projectile 25 nautical miles northeast of Oman, UKMTO said, adding that a few containers were damaged but there was no fire and immediate casualties.