

India, U.S. draw up deal on rare earth elements

Framework follows growing concerns over China's export controls of strategic metals; Australia, Japan join fellow Quad members in separate framework among the grouping on critical minerals

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

On the sidelines of the 11th Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM), India and the United States on Tuesday firmed up an important framework for cooperation in ensuring steady supplies of critical minerals, in a move that follows growing concerns over China's export controls of rare earth minerals and strategic metals vital for technology supply chains.

"The Framework aims to deepen India-U.S. cooperation across the critical minerals and rare earths supply chain, including mining, processing, recycling and related investments. It seeks to strengthen resilient and diversified supply chains,

Rare deal

The framework comes amid shortfall of critical metals in global markets after China imposed export curbs on rare earth elements



Mining strategy: The agreement follows continued India-U.S. engagements, including India becoming a signatory to the U.S.-led Pax Silica initiative. REUTERS

Framework seeks to:

- Implement effective management of critical minerals and rare earths scrap
- Strengthen resilient and diversified supply chains
- Promote collaboration in financing

while promoting collaboration in financing and effective management of critical minerals and rare earths scrap," said an announcement on the "Framework" titled "Securing of supply in the mining and processing of critical minerals and rare earths".

The understanding between India and the U.S. has been under consideration at least since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington in February 2025, when secure supply routes for critical minerals were considered a "shared strategic

priority", said a official press note.

A separate framework on critical minerals was also signed among the four Quad nations – Australia, India, Japan and the United States – which aims at mobilising around \$20 billion in government and private-sector support to establish stable supply chains for critical minerals.

The initiatives aim at dealing with the shortfall of critical metals in global markets that intensified after China imposed export controls on rare earth elements in 2025, after the U.S.'s imposition of tariffs on a large number of partner countries.

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India, U.S. draw up deal on rare earth elements

The India-U.S. deal was built upon continued engagements between the two countries, including India becoming a signatory to the U.S.-led Pax Silica initiative on February 20.

A statement issued by the U.S. Embassy said the United States is “mobilising unprecedented resources to secure critical supply chains, supporting projects with more than \$30 billion in letters of interest, investments, loans and other support in partnership with the private sector”.

The Quad Critical Minerals Initiative Framework will help in nurturing projects on critical minerals that are located in ‘Quad partner countries’ and are ‘operated by companies headquartered in Quad partner countries’, thereby blocking supply chain gaps in critical minerals.

Both the India-U.S. and Quad-level frameworks are expected to allow for greater alignment and harmonisation of domestic laws and regulations to facilitate easier access to the supply chain.

Quad announces maritime plans amid Hormuz crisis

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Responding to the challenges emanating from the conflict-hit Persian Gulf and the tensions in the South China Sea, the Quad grouping on Tuesday pledged to enhance cooperation in the maritime and energy domains.

At the 11th Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM), External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his counterparts from Australia, Japan, and the United States launched initiatives on energy security, as well as on maritime surveillance and domain awareness to aid in emergency operations and humanitarian responses at sea.

“On the issue of maritime security, there are two big announcements. The first is the launch of the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration initiative, which is going to leverage each of our country's maritime surveillance



Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar with visiting Quad Foreign Ministers after the meeting on Tuesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

capabilities in the Indo-Pacific to enhance information sharing,” U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said at a press conference on the Hyderabad House lawns, where he was joined by Mr. Jaishankar, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong.

Second, he said, is the “expansion of the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness initiative which can provide near real-time commercial maritime do-

main awareness data to countries throughout the Indo-Pacific region”. The law of the sea

The immediate context of these two initiatives found prominent mention in the joint statement issued at the end of the meeting, which insisted on freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the South China Sea.

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QUESTIONS ON FUTURE

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Quad lays out maritime measures amid Iran war

Mr. Rubio also announced that India will host the “next iteration of the Quad at Sea mission, which will bring together our respective Coast Guards in one place and one ship”.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had said, while visiting New Delhi earlier this month, that the Strait of Hormuz is not part of any international waterway and as a result, Iran has no obligation to comply with the UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea). The Quad joint statement contradicted the Iranian claim, and condemned attacks on commercial shipping vessels..

The grouping also announced the Quad Initiative on Indo-Pacific Energy Security to boost regional energy resilience and emergency response exercises. Mr. Jaishankar also hinted at concerns over the continuing chokehold in the strait and emphasised the need for “safe and unimpeded maritime commerce”. Ms. Wong announced the Quad Ports of the Future Partnership, under which the grouping will launch a pilot project for port infrastructure in Fiji.

No clarity on Quad leaders' summit; questions rise about group's future

Suhasini Haidar

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

The Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting ended on Tuesday without any clarity on when the next Quad Summit, which was due to be held in India, will be scheduled. This sparked speculation that the Quad may now revert to a Ministerial dialogue, as it was before it was upgraded in 2021.

Previous Quad joint statements have always identified the country that would host the next leaders' Summit. However the statement issued after the meeting between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio only referred to them as "looking forward to the next Summit".

Sources said that Australia will host the next Foreign Ministers' meeting,



S. Jaishankar at a joint press conference following the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

as India will hand over the chair of the grouping, and the Summit could now be held on the sidelines of other multilateral meetings where all four leaders may be present later this year.

Scheduling woes

"The leaders' schedules always are very difficult to pin down," Ministry Joint Secretary for the Americas K. Nagaraj Naidu said. He responded to a number of questions on the issue, but gave no indication of

whether there was still a chance that the Summit, which was due to be held in India in 2024 and then in 2025, could now be hosted in 2026.

"Obviously, that depends on the availability of leaders, but we look forward to [the Summit]," Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said. "In the meantime, the three Foreign Ministers' Quad meetings held in a very short space of time demonstrate the commitment of all countries to it," she added, referring to meetings of the Quad FMM in January and July 2025 prior to the meeting on Tuesday.

Asked by *The Hindu* if the lack of a Summit-level Quad meet indicates a downgrade of the grouping, Ms. Wong said she would "take offence to suggesting that anything held in Australia is a downgrade".

Japanese official spokesperson Toshihiro Kitamura also gave a non-committal reply, but denied that the

U.S. under Mr. Trump was slowing down Quad engagement due to his closer relationship with China, and his plans to host Chinese President Xi Jinping in Washington on September 24.

"The day [for Quad Summit] is not decided yet," Mr. Kitamura told journalists, acknowledging that he sensed some "scepticism" in India about the U.S. engagement with the Quad. "However, I would like to emphasise that as we have observed, the U.S. commitment is still standing," he said.

Mr. Rubio has consistently countered questions about the U.S.'s commitment to the Quad, given that Mr. Trump has not recently referred to the grouping that was restarted in 2017, during his first Presidential tenure. Mr. Rubio said that he had held a meeting of Quad Ministers almost immediately after being sworn in in January 2025, and convened another in July.

Bad fences

Marco Rubio's visit was an opportunity to mend economic and energy ties

Secretary of State Marco Rubio's four-day visit to India, his first since taking office in January 2025, was understood to have been aimed at smoothing bilateral ties that have been deeply ruptured over the past year. The problems have been multifold, ranging from the U.S.'s high tariffs and cutting down on visas, immigration and outsourcing; to sanctions on India's energy procurement and investment, its moves with China and Pakistan, and the pejorative remarks by President Donald Trump and his cabinet colleagues about India. Although the Modi government has not criticised the U.S. for its actions, there is no doubt that the U.S. attack on Iran on February 28, the wider regional conflict and the Hormuz Strait blockade, have caused immense economic worries for India as well. It was thus hoped that Mr. Rubio's visit, which combined the bilateral agenda alongside the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting, would help repair one of the worst phases in bilateral ties caused largely by Washington's unilateral moves. Mr. Rubio consistently held that the relationship was well and that "President Trump loves India", while responding to repeated questions on Mr. Trump's post that amplified anti-immigrant sentiments referring to India as a "hell-hole". New Delhi had no doubt laid out the red carpet for Mr. Rubio. In a departure from protocol, Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed him on his arrival and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spent much of the weekend in meetings with Mr. Rubio, including two U.S. Embassy receptions. On Sunday, Mr. Jaishankar attended a celebration marking the U.S.'s 250th Independence Day and Mr. Rubio's birthday. Mr. Rubio visited the Missionaries of Charity, in Kolkata, and went to Agra and Jaipur for sightseeing. In bilateral talks, the Foreign Ministers discussed the full gamut of ties, including trade, energy, civil nuclear technological and defence cooperation, as well as the regional and geopolitical conflicts.

However, apart from one agreement on critical minerals cooperation, which replicates their partnership within the Quad and the 15-nation Pax Silica, the visit's bilateral part ended with few outcomes of note. Mr. Rubio's refusal to acknowledge a problem in the relationship indicates that the U.S., once considered India's most trusted partnership, has failed to recognise New Delhi's concerns. It is hoped, however, that Mr. Rubio was informed of them, as both sides prepare for a possible Modi-Trump meeting at the G-7 Summit in Evian, France, in mid-June, where India is a special invitee. This will be the first time that the leaders have come face to face since Mr. Modi's February 2025 Washington visit and all that followed, and an opportunity to mend the relationship especially in the areas it has frayed the most – economic, energy and regional security.

U.S. says 'self-defence' as Iran accuses it of breaking ceasefire with fresh strikes

Agence France-Presse

TEHRAN

Iran accused the U.S. of breaching their ceasefire on Tuesday and warned it was ready to retaliate after overnight U.S. strikes targeting Iranian missile sites and mine-laying boats threatened a deal to end the war.

Iranian state media reported overnight blasts in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas, near the Strait of Hormuz, and the country's Revolutionary Guards Corps said its forces had downed a U.S. drone entering its airspace and had fired at an F-35 fighter jet. According to the maritime safety monitor UKMTO, a blast damaged a



An Iranian in Tehran watching a broadcast delivered on behalf of the country's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei on Tuesday. AFP

tanker on the waterline off Oman – although the crew and vessel were reportedly safe after what was described as an “external explosion”.

“The U.S. terrorist army, continuing its illegal and unjustified actions since the ceasefire... has, in the

past 48 hours, committed a gross violation of the ceasefire in the Hormozgan region,” the Iranian Foreign Ministry said. It added that Tehran “will not leave any evil unanswered and will not hesitate to defend the Iranian nation,” without elaborating.

The Brent benchmark oil price jumped up by almost 3% after U.S. Central Command announced the new wave of bombings.

Tim Hawkins, a spokesperson for U.S. Central Command, said: “U.S. forces conducted self-defence strikes in southern Iran today to protect our troops from threats posed by Iranian forces.” He gave few details of the attacks and said only that the targets included missile launch sites and boats trying to “emplace mines”. Despite the strikes, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday that a deal remained within reach.

‘NO MORE SHIELDS’

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Region will 'no longer be shields' for U.S. bases, says Iran's Mojtaba

Supreme Leader says U.S. no longer has any 'safe haven' in the region and is moving further away from its former position; Iranian negotiators are seeking \$24 bn of frozen assets to be released as part of a 14-point memorandum to end hostilities

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei said on Tuesday that regional countries would no longer be shields for U.S. bases, in a written statement carried by state television.

"What is certain in this regard is that the hands of time will not turn backwards, and the nations and lands of the region will no longer serve as shields for American bases," said Mr. Khamenei, who has not appeared in public since he took office in March, in a message marking the Id al-Adha holiday.



People walk past an anti-U.S. and anti-Israel mural depicting missiles hitting an aircraft carrier, in Tehran on Tuesday. AFP

He said the United States "in addition to no longer having any safe haven in the region for aggression and the establishment of military bases, is

moving further and further away from its former position with each passing day".

The remarks come as Iran and the United States

continued exchanges aimed at reaching a deal to end the war which began on February 28 and spread across the region.

On Tuesday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had downed a U.S. drone and shot at other aircraft attempting to enter the country's airspace, without specifying when the incidents took place.

Meanwhile, Iranian media said that Tehran's negotiators were seeking the release of around \$24 billion in frozen assets abroad as part of a process aimed at ending the war with the United States.

The report by *Tasnim* news agency came as a top

Iranian delegation was in Qatar.

"Iran's frozen assets are to be released during the course of the negotiations, and this amount is estimated at \$24 billion in accordance with the 14-point memorandum of understanding," *Tasnim* reported

Around half of that sum "should be made available at the start of the announcement of the memorandum," it added.

There is no official figure for the amount of frozen Iranian assets abroad, though Iranian media have recently estimated the total at between \$100 billion and \$123 billion.

China, Pakistan agree to ‘unswervingly safeguard’ and develop bilateral ties

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan and China agreed to “unswervingly safeguard” and develop their bilateral relations by working closely to build a shared future, according to a joint statement issued on Tuesday.

The statement came at the end of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s official visit to China during May 23-26 at the invitation of Premier Li Qiang. The two sides signed a number of cooperation documents in various fields during Mr. Sharif’s visit.

President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang separately met Pakistan’s Prime Minister, and the two sides



Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with Chinese President Xi Jinping prior to a bilateral meeting in Beijing on Monday. AP

reached a new broad consensus on further deepening the China-Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership and on international and regional issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Sharif also attended

the ceremony to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

“Throughout the 75 years of diplomatic relations, this friendship has

remained rock solid no matter how the international and regional situations evolved, and the two countries have always trusted, respected and supported each other and stood by each other in times of difficulties and challenges,” the statement stated.

Pakistan reaffirmed its strong commitment to the one-China principle, saying that it firmly supports all efforts by China to achieve national reunification and resolutely opposes any form of “Taiwan independence”. China reiterated its unwavering support for Pakistan in defending its national sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity.

Not in favour of Pak. joining Abraham Accords, says Asif

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that he was not in favour of Islamabad joining the Abraham Accords to normalise relations with Israel.

His comments came after U.S. President Donald Trump asked countries involved in the peace talks with Iran to sign on to the Abraham Accords, which deal with establishing diplomatic, economic and security ties between Israel and Arab nations.

“Personally, I don't think we should join any such accord which clashes with our fundamental ide-



Khawaja Asif

ologies,” Mr. Asif said during an interview on a talk show with *Samaa TV* on Monday night. Among the negotiators, the UAE and Bahrain are already members of the Accords, and Mr. Trump expects Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkiye, Egypt and Jordan to sign up.

Cabinet approves raising ration card income ceiling to ₹2.5 lakh

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Cabinet has approved raising the annual family income eligibility limit for ration cards from ₹1.2 lakh to ₹2.5 lakh. Food and Supplies Minister Man-

jinder Singh Sirsa announced on Tuesday.

Mr. Sirsa said the earlier income threshold “no longer reflected the city’s economic realities”.

The Capital currently has about 64.93 lakh beneficiaries under the Na-

tional Food Security Act and the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, with nearly 15.46 lakh ration cards in circulation.

The process of issuing new ration cards resumed on May 15 after the government identified 7.71 lakh in-

eligible and bogus enrolments during an audit of the Public Distribution System beneficiaries.

Digital wallet

The government also announced plans to introduce a Central Bank Digital

Currency (CBDC)-enabled ration distribution system.

Under the proposed model, instead of only distributing physical foodgrain or transferring unrestricted cash into bank accounts, the subsidy amount equivalent to the

entitled ration would be deposited into a beneficiary’s CBDC wallet, which would allow them to purchase foodgrain from authorised ration shops or empanelled outlets using the digital currency, said a senior official.

Gurugram sex ratio dips to 862, DC orders intensified campaign against illegal sex determination

The Hindu Bureau

GURUGRAM

Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Uttam Singh on Tuesday ordered stricter monitoring under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC-PNDT) Act and directed officials to intensify action against illegal sex determination tests after taking note of a sharp decline in sex ratio at birth (SRB).

Reviewing data – suggesting a fall in the SRB to 862 girls per 1,000 boys in the first four months of 2026, down from 901 in 2025 – at a District-Level Standing Committee meeting, Mr. Singh directed further strengthening of

the monitoring mechanism to curb female foeticide and promote gender equality.

Data also indicated a dip in the State average from 923 to 898 during the same period.

Mr. Singh directed officials to conduct special awareness campaigns in villages reporting low sex ratios. He said rallies, wall writings, poster drives, and activities under the Centre's flagship social awareness campaign, 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' should be scaled up to ensure that the message against female foeticide reaches the public.

The DC also reviewed action under the PC-PNDT Act, the Medical Termina-

tion of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, and the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Act.

Chief Medical Officer Lokvir Singh told the committee that 395 centres in the district are registered under the PC-PNDT Act, of which 311 had been inspected. Three FIRs were registered in 2025 and two in 2026 for violations. Registrations of three centres were cancelled due to irregularities, and five ultrasound machines were sealed. The district has 333 registered MTP centres, of which 217 have been inspected. Of the ART centres, 59 are registered and operational while 48 unregistered centres have been shut down.