

Centre tightens norms for foreign contributions

Amended FCRA Rules stipulate that NGOs must stick to specified activities in their category and geographical areas; disclosure of social media accounts and other publications made mandatory

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) wanting to access foreign funds must now stick to a list of activities specified by the Centre, according to the latest amendment to the Rules of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010, notified on Monday.

While NGOs seeking foreign funds are required to register under one of the five permitted categories, namely social, economic, educational, cultural, and religious, this is the first time separate activity lists have been laid out for those in each category.

NGOs must now disclose their activities, the geographical scope of their programmes, their websites, social media accounts, and publications. They must pay separate fees for each category and State or Union Territory they operate in, as opposed to the previous single fee for FCRA registrants.

Any new registration must follow the new norms and existing registrations must comply with the

Funding check

Under the fresh changes to Rules of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, all NGOs are required to disclose specific activities and geographical scope of their programmes to receive contributions under 5 permitted categories:



EDUCATIONAL

- Schools, colleges, and libraries
- Scholarships
- Research institutions and think tanks
- Civic-awareness and constitutional-rights programmes



ECONOMIC

- Livelihood generation
- Skill development
- Agricultural sectors
- Entrepreneurship and micro-enterprises
- Financial and digital inclusion



RELIGIOUS

- Places of worship
- Religious education
- Pilgrim services
- Meditation programmes
- Preservation of religious traditions



SOCIAL

- Public health
- Rehabilitation
- Sanitation and nutrition
- Disaster relief



CULTURAL

- Preservation of Indian arts and languages
- Museums, archives, and cultural festivals
- Heritage conservation

changes within the next year. Any violations will be penalised with a minimum fine of ₹1 lakh, according to another order from the Union Home Ministry.

The Ministry regulates all foreign donations through the FCRA. Earlier amendments of the Rules only required NGOs to give an undertaking that their acceptance of foreign funds is not likely to affect the sovereignty and integrity of India or impact friendly relations with foreign states or disrupt communal harmony.

The amended Rules also broaden the definition of an NGO's "key functionary" beyond office-bearers and directors to include trustees, partners, the *Karta* or head of a Hindu Undivided Family, governing body members, and anyone else controlling or managing the organisation. Associations having foreign nationals (other than persons of Indian origin) as key functionaries will ordinarily not be considered eligible for registration or prior permission, unless specifically permit-

ted by the Centre, according to the new Rules. NGOs must also declare whether their association or any of their key functionaries brought out any publication during the year, including books, magazines, and newspaper articles.

A senior government official said that the amendments were effected to bring uniformity in Foreign Contribution forms (F-C) and to avoid duplication.

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Govt. tightens norms for foreign contributions

Some categories specifically exclude political activities. For instance, the “educational” purpose lists 22 activities but adds the caveat that “awareness programmes on constitutional rights, fundamental duties, and civic responsibilities” must be “strictly non-political in nature.”

There are 16 permitted categories of religious activities, including “conduct of religious education, moral instruction, satsangs, discourses, and meditation retreats (excluding proselytisation)”, and “burial/cremation ground development and maintenance.” There are 19 activities listed under “economic” purpose, and 30 items under the “social” category.

The Ministry notified another order which specifies fines for FCRA violations such as excess administrative spending, speculative investments, misuse of funds, unauthorised receipt/use of foreign contributions, and using funds for unapproved purposes or in unapproved States or Union Territories. **Any use of funds for purposes other than those for which they were received can attract a penalty of up to 30% of the amount misused or ₹1 lakh, whichever is higher. Similarly, using foreign funds for purposes or in areas not covered under the NGO’s approval or registration also invites a fine of 30% of the amount or ₹1 lakh, whichever is higher.**

IMO announces plan to evacuate vessels stuck in Persian Gulf



The plan announced by the UN body involves two routes that ships are currently using to transit the Strait of Hormuz. REUTERS

M. Kalyanaraman
CHENNAI

International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez has announced a plan to evacuate all the ships – and the 11,000 seafarers on them – stranded in the Persian Gulf due to the war in West Asia.

“This large-scale operation will be carried out in close cooperation with Iran, Oman, and all other coastal States in the region, the United States, and the maritime industry,” he said.

Although his statement does not explicitly refer to Iran’s plan, the plan put out by the Sultanate of Oman does mention both routes – one along the Omani coast and the other along the Iranian coast – that ships are currently us-

ing to transit the Strait of Hormuz. The plan also asks vessels to contact the respective “coastal state” of their selected route to confirm transit.

Mr. Dominguez added: “We have secured the necessary safety guarantees and have thoroughly verified the conditions for safe navigation to support these operations.”

The IMO, a UN agency, referred to a letter written by Oman’s Ministry of Defence to Pakistan’s National Hydrographic Office that gives a detailed plan for the evacuation. Pakistan, along with Qatar, has been a mediator in the negotiations between Iran and the U.S.

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‘MOU HELPED ENERGY FLOW’

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IMO plans to evacuate ships in Persian Gulf

The letter says that the Sultanate of Oman has worked with the IMO to provide all vessels with the option of a temporary maritime corridor as per listed coordinates. To reduce risks and ensure safe navigation, the IMO has developed a phased approach based on groups of vessels.

The letter says that the traditional traffic separation scheme is unsafe in a reference to mines, and two routes, one south and another north of it, shall be used for transit. Vessels will be contacted individually and advised of their allocated transit day by the parties coordinated by the IMO.

These two routes can handle 20-30 ships a day while the traditional route at the centre of the strait used to see some 130 ships transiting every day before the war. Hundreds of ships are still stranded west of the Strait of Hormuz.

There will be a designated waiting area within international waters where ships will go. From there, the vessels will contact “the relevant coastal state”, in a reference to Iran for the northern route. The letter adds: “Each shipowner and master remains responsible for conducting an independent risk assessment prior to voyage.” The Automatic Identification System of the vessel shall stay on, the letter adds.

The letter gives the coordinates of the Omani route that ships should take.

President presents second set of Padma awards

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj, actors Mammootty and Satish Shah, cricketer Rohit Sharma, and playback singer Alka Yagnik were among the eminent personalities who received the Padma awards from President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday.

The Padma awards, one of the highest civilian awards of the country, are conferred in three categories: the Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and the Padma Shri.

In the second civil investiture ceremony at the Ganantra Mandap of the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the President presented the Padma Vibhushan to former Supreme Court judge K. T. Thomas for public affairs and to eminent Malayalam



President Droupadi Murmu confers the Padma Vibhushan on former Supreme Court judge K.T. Thomas during the second civil investiture ceremony in New Delhi on Tuesday. Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj and playback singer Alka Yagnik received the Padma Bhushan. PTI, ANI

journalist P. Narayanan for contribution to literature and education.

Alka Yagnik, Mammootty, American oncologist Dattatreya Nori, Vijay Amritraj, industrialist S.K.M. Maeilanandhan, and social worker and educationist Vellappally Natesan received the Padma Bhushan from the Presi-

dent during the ceremony. Rupri Soren, wife of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha founder Shibu Soren, received the Padma Bhushan on behalf of the late leader.

Padma Shri

The President conferred the Padma Shri on cricketer Rohit Sharma, who led India to victory in the last



T-20 World Cup, and on hockey player Savita Punia. Actor R. Madhavan, aerospace scientist Chandramouli Gaddamanugu, who led the Akash missile system from development to deployment during Operation Sindoor, and noted writer Asok Kumar Halder were among those who received the Padma Shri.



Vladimir Mestvirishvili, the Georgian coach who mentored Indian Olympic medallists such as Sushil Kumar, Yogeshwar Dutt, and Ravi Dahiya, was awarded the Padma Shri posthumously.

The President also conferred the Padma Shri on actor Satish Shah posthumously.

Congress urges Centre not to rush into signing a trade agreement with the U.S.

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday urged the Union government not to be “bamboozled” into signing a trade agreement with the United States, arguing that the proposed deal in its current form was tilted against India’s interests.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should stop “appeasing” U.S. President Donald Trump and resist the pressure to conclude an agreement during the visit of U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer to New Delhi. The deal could adversely affect farmers and domestic industry, he said.

Mr. Ramesh referred to the India-U.S. joint statement issued on February 6, in which the U.S. had proposed reduction of tariffs on Indian exports



There is absolutely no need for India to be bamboozled into signing any trade pact which, as it stands now, is heavily against India’s interests

JAIRAM RAMESH
Congress leader

while India was expected to substantially lower tariffs on American agricultural and industrial products and increase purchases from the U.S.

He said that the understanding had been undermined by a subsequent ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court which found President Trump’s reciprocal tariff policy to be illegal.

Mr. Ramesh stated that the tariff concessions promised by the U.S. effectively became uncertain after the court ruling, and Washington later imposed a temporary 10% tariff on

imports from trading partners, including India.

Stating that India was among the countries being investigated by the U.S. for alleged unfair trade practices, Mr. Ramesh alleged that Washington was using the probe to pressure New Delhi into formalising the proposed agreement.

“Such an agreement is not a deal but a steal by the U.S.,” he said. “There is absolutely no need for India to be bamboozled into signing any trade agreement which, as it stands now, is heavily against India’s interests,” he said.

Ban on Telegram stretched meaning of ‘information’ under the IT Act

NEWS ANALYSIS

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Union government temporarily blocked Telegram to protect the sanctity of the NEET (UG) re-test by a single interpretative sleight of hand which compressed an entire intermediary platform into an expression: “information”.

The ban won the endorsement of the Delhi High Court by stretching the meaning of “information” under the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000.

Section 2(1)(v) of the Act had traditionally defined “information” in diminutive units, including data, messages, text, image, sound, voice, codes, computer programme, software, and databases. The Telegram ban changed that legal interpretation.

The government argued

that an online platform like Telegram was an “aggregation” or “compilation” of these units. By reading entire platforms run by companies, which were legal entities by their own nature, within the ambit of ‘information’ under the Act, the government has effectively weaponised the content-blocking provision of Section 69A.

Section 69A of the IT Act gives the government power to issue directions to block public access to any ‘information’ through a computer resource. Here, the interpretation of the Centre has led to the successful replacement of the word ‘information’ with an ‘entire intermediary platform’.

The High Court, in its June 19 order, endorsed the Centre’s view that the “blocking power under Section 69A of the IT Act extends beyond individual pieces of content and, hav-



The ban won the endorsement of the Delhi High Court.

ing regard to its wide legislative scope, encompasses the software architecture, codebase, databases, and programmatic ecosystem constituting an application”.

Telegram had not accepted the “expansive” interpretation of the term “information” while noting that the government, acting through Section 69A, could only block access to “specific information”.

Such a sweeping ban had disproportionately affected the very section it

Access to app restored

Access to Telegram resumed on Tuesday after a week-long blocking order expired. The platform had approached the Delhi High Court seeking a stay on the order, but the court held that the blocking direction was proportionate.

deemed to protect. Many of the 150 million Telegram users were students and educators who used the platform to share study material and educational resources for NEET preparation.

The platform’s arguments are backed by the Supreme Court’s judgment in the *Anuradha Bhasin* case on digital freedoms, holding that restrictions on fundamental rights must be proportionate and only the least restrictive measure must be employed.

● EXPERTS SAID THE RESULTS MAY REFLECT BEIJING'S PUSH TO PROJECT SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN COMPUTING SYSTEMS MORE THAN ITS POSITION IN THE GLOBAL AI RACE

China beats US with world's fastest supercomputer

Reuters

San Francisco, June 23

CHINA HAS overtaken the US to win the top spot on a list of the world's fastest supercomputers, but the results may say more about Beijing's desire to show self-sufficiency in computing systems than its standing in the global AI race, experts said.

The LineShine system at the National Supercomputing Centre in Shenzhen, China, uses domestically designed chips and won the top spot on the TOP500, a biannual global ranking of supercomputers, with the country's first listing in three years.

The ranking comes as the US and China are increasingly competing in advanced computing, with US President Don-

ald Trump on Monday signing an executive order that aims to put the US ahead of China in the emerging field of quantum computing.

In the June 2026 edition of TOP500, LineShine beat out the previous titleholder, El Capitan, a supercomputer housed at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory that the US government uses to develop and maintain its nuclear weapons stockpile.

But technology and policy experts interviewed by Reuters said the results do not mean that China has the world's fastest computer for AI work because of changes in the computing industry in recent years and the methods used to compile the list. LineShine ranked fourth on a benchmark test designed to simulate computing work that



The ranking comes as the US and China are increasingly competing in advanced computing. REUTERS

is more similar to AI.

Benchmark tests

For decades, supercomputers strung together many separate machines to work on

TOP500 list, supercomputer operators must run a set of benchmark tests that aims to mimic such work.

But in more recent years, cloud computing companies such as Microsoft, Amazon.com and Alphabet's Google built out massive supercomputers of their own but geared them for AI work instead.

Most of those companies do not opt to compete for a spot on the TOP500 list.

A study last year by AI policy researchers Konstantin Pilz, James Sanders, Robi Rahman and Lennart Heim found that SpaceX-owned xAI's Colossus system was already likely more powerful than the US government's El Capitan.

"If the hyperscalers submitted their systems, this

'world's fastest' would not crack the top five," said Jimmy Goodrich, a senior fellow at the University of California's Institute for Global Conflict and Cooperation.

Chip design efforts

The Chinese victory on the list more likely shows that China wanted recognition for its chip design efforts, which is a change from recent years, experts said. China first took the top spot on the TOP500 in 2010 and traded titles back and forth with the US and Japan until 2023, when China stopped submitting its systems after years of chip- and computing-related export controls from Trump's first administration and later under President Joe Biden.

From Ukraine to Lebanon, 'invisible' drones are redefining asymmetric warfare

Abhinav Chakraborty

New Delhi, June 23

A FRAGILE ceasefire prevails between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Hezbollah in Lebanon. This came after months of fighting that saw the Iran-backed militia deploying a low-cost weapon to lethal effect against Israel's advanced electronic warfare systems: fibre-optic drones.

'Invisible' drones

Fibre-optic drones, as the name suggests, are connected to their operators through fibre-optic cables — these are high-speed, high-strength, and lightweight network cables that transmit data as pulses of light through tiny strands of glass or plastic. This thin cable is first wound onto a spool and covered with a protective shell before being attached to a drone.

"So it's a big spool of very thin wire, almost hair-like, connected to both the drone and the operator. The entire communication is through this cable, and this thin wire pro-

vides security to the drone because no radio emissions can be picked up," Group Captain Rajiv Kumar Narang (retired), a drone systems expert and senior fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, told *The Indian Express*.

When the drone takes off, the cable begins to unwind and can reach reasonable speeds without encountering too much drag. According to Narang, the drone's information and control is managed through this thin wire, which initially allowed operation over shorter distances of about 5 km and later went up to — as per some claims — distances of even 20 to 30 km. Since these cables can transmit operational data during flight, they enable a drone operator to see their target and the surrounding environment in real time.

The Russia-Ukraine war has been the testing ground for innovation in drone warfare. Narang said that given traditional drones emit radio frequency (RF) signals and create their signatures owing to their use of GPS or radio control, they are susceptible to



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A Ukrainian first-person view drone with a fibre-optic wire for communication.

jamming, detection, and fixing of position. Fibre-optic drones emerged as the solution.

Tackling the threat

These drones have found a new battlefield in southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah has been fighting the IDF. Reports indicate that Israel, despite its sophisticated

jamming systems, has found it tough to neutralise this threat and suffered setbacks since April, be it in the form of wounded soldiers or destroyed armoured vehicles.

Effective neutralisation is preceded by detection and tracking. According to Narang, detection requires proactive systems. "We need to develop better radars and, of course, electro-optic systems and infrared systems. They should be able to provide real-time detection, identification, and tracking of small, slow and low flying drones," he said.

Narang said the only source for detection of a fibre-optic drone is its radar cross-section — a metric that determines how visible it is to radar. This requires highly capable radar systems and is extremely difficult with current technological levels.

In terms of neutralisation, the drone's small size and lack of RF signals pose an additional challenge besides the lack of time for detection. Drone neutralisation systems, being multi-sensor and multi-shooter systems, are becoming expensive to achieve assured neutralisation of hostile drones.

A report in *The Jerusalem Post* pointed to efforts by top Israeli defence companies to present a range of solutions to the IDF. Among them were energy-based systems, including one that utilises electromagnetic force to capture and immobilise the drone. Another proposed solution are kinetic interception systems — also called "hit-to-kill" — which destroy targets such as ballistic missiles and hostile drones using kinetic energy, that is, extreme physical force of a direct, high-velocity collision.

For now, Israeli soldiers have taken a cue out of Ukraine's playbook by using rather rudimentary techniques such as protective nets and even metal enclosures on military equipment to block these drones.

Besides, these drones also have their shortcomings. For instance, they are susceptible to bad weather owing to their light body frame. They can also stop functioning if the thin cable snaps.

The Indian context

India's four-day conflict with Pakistan

last May in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack also saw extensive use of drone swarms and loitering munitions. Since then, India has sought to learn from its own experience as well as other battlegrounds.

Narang believes swarms would be a "major challenge". He said: "From an Indian point of view, I think we need to think of developing better 'hard-kill' counter-drone systems." "Hard kill" refers to physically destroying the drone, whether by firing a gun, using a suicide drone, or launching a small missile.

Since jamming may not be an option against fibre-optic drones, Narang said that India could also develop Light Combat Helicopters and Light Combat Aircraft, among others, as airborne counter-drone platforms. Narang also suggested greater use of AI and upgradation of munitions in detection and neutralisation alongside hybrid and mobile air defence systems to enhance accuracy and effectiveness.

FULL REPORT ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM/EXPLAINED

As Vance leads negotiations with Iran, Trump creates disruptions in his path

The New York Times

AS VICE President J D Vance entered the fifth hour of negotiations with Iranian leaders over the weekend, President Donald Trump weighed in with an ill-timed threat to start bombing again.

If Iranians closed the Strait of Hormuz, Trump told a *Fox News* reporter, the negotiators talking to Vance would never make it back to their country — in fact, they would have no country to return to at all.

For Vance, this was the latest example of his increasingly tricky role as the frontman in the US negotiations with Iran, as Trump repeatedly creates disruptions in his path.

On Monday, Vance said the first round of talks had laid “a successful foundation” for peace. But now, Vance will have to find a way to end a war that he opposed at the start, while navigating his boss’s whims and an adversary that has proved itself, at least in part, immune to



Vice President JD Vance in Switzerland. AP

Trump's threats.

“What we told the Iranians yesterday is when you guys engage in what us millennials might call trash talk, you can’t expect the president of the United States not to respond and not to correct the record,” he said Monday at a news conference. “So when they say things that aren’t true, the president is going to respond to it.”

Both sides have signed an MoU to end hostilities and are now trying to strike a lasting nuclear deal in 60 days. But for Vance, the presumptive favourite for the 2028 Republican

nomination, the situation remains politically precarious.

“If it works out, I’m going to take the credit,” Trump said of the peace deal last week. “If it doesn’t work out, I’m blaming JD.” Vance has said the President was joking, but Trump has never shied away from deflecting blame onto others — and how Vance handles future of the negotiations will factor into Republicans’ performance in the midterm elections and his future as a potential Trump successor.

Karim Sadjadpour, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Vance was in a risky spot. He could get credit for ending an unpopular war, Sadjadpour said. Or he may end up being “viewed as the architect of an American humiliation and a deal that concedes billions of dollars to a committed US adversary.”

Making the situation even more difficult, the V-P must depend on the cooperation of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard commanders. “That’s not an auspicious position for any American politician, let alone an aspiring president,” Sadjadpour said.

And even as Americans are clamoring for Trump administration to stop the fighting and bring down energy costs, Sadjadpour argued Americans seem to care more about how wars end. He pointed out that President Joe Biden nose-dived in the polls after the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, during which 13 US service members were killed. “Americans dislike wars, but they dislike defeats even more,” he said.

Almost immediately after Vance left Switzerland, the foundation he outlined for a possible longer-term deal started showing cracks. Vance said Iran had agreed to invite IAEA into the country, but Iran said they had made “no new commitments.”

Vance also described a potential funding scheme in which Qatar would unfreeze assets for Iranians to use to buy US soy, corn and wheat. Hours later, Trump repeated that idea in the Oval Office and said food for the Iranians was “going to be bought exclusively through the US from our farmers.” Iranian officials rejected that idea.

Afghan Taliban hold first, closed-door discussions with EU on deportations

Associated Press
Brussels, June 23

A DELEGATION from the Afghan Taliban met Tuesday with European Union staff in Brussels for closed-door talks that focused on diplomatic services and the “dignified returns” of Afghans to the war-ravaged nation, a Taliban official said.

Afghans make up one of the

largest groups of migrants seeking asylum in the EU, but a growing number of governments in the 27-nation bloc want to speed up and increase deportations for those whose claims are rejected or who commit crimes in their host countries. Calling the visit “historic”, Abdul Qahar Balkhi, a spokesperson for the Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said talks focused on “trust-building

measures,” the Taliban’s diplomatic presence in the EU and a “dignified return process.”

The Commission said it co-chaired the meet with Sweden and that representatives from 15 of the EU’s 27 nations participated. Belgian Foreign Minister Maxime Prévot, “Making a meeting possible in the framework of our host-state policy does not amount to recognition...”

Sri Lanka decides to appoint military-led dengue monitoring unit amid surge in cases across island

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka has decided to appoint a military-led team to monitor the sudden surge in dengue cases across the island, even as hospitals report overcrowding and mounting pressure on the public health system.

According to a statement from the President's office, the decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Minister of Health and Mass Media, Dr. Nalinda Jayatissa, at the Presidential Secretariat on Monday. The monitoring unit will strengthen legal enforcement measures and further reinforce dengue prevention activities through the "Community Empo-

werment and Public Safety Committees" established at the local level, the statement said.

As of June 20, the island's health authorities have reported a total of 46,037 cases, with nearly 10,000 of those reported from the capital, Colombo. As many as 28 dengue deaths have so far been reported this year. The monitoring unit, "under the leadership of the Tri-Forces", will strengthen legal enforcement measures and further reinforce dengue prevention activities, the statement said.

Last week, Sri Lanka's Health Ministry said hospitals had exceeded their capacity due to a rapid spike in dengue patients being reported. According to me-



Dengue mosquito larvae inside a pipette tube after being collected during an inspection of houses in Colombo, Sri Lanka. REUTERS

dia reports, Mr. Jayatissa warned that the island's hospital system could come under severe strain if dengue cases continued to rise.

Sri Lanka is widely credited with one of the best public health systems in the region. The country

experienced several dengue outbreaks from time to time, especially around its monsoon seasons.

Sri Lanka witnessed a massive dengue outbreak in 2017 with a total of 1,86,101 cases, the largest outbreak so far, and 440 dengue-related deaths were reported. The years 2019 and 2023, too, saw outbreaks, prompting authorities to launch a 'National Strategic Plan' for the prevention and control of dengue.

The number of dengue patients increases during the second and fourth quarters of each year, coinciding with the monsoon rains. "Large-scale outbreaks of dengue have occurred every three to four years with high intensity," a 2024 report pointed out.

Tehran says it won't permit IAEA inspectors at bombed nuclear sites

U.S. President Trump and Vice-President Vance have said Iran would allow nuclear inspections of its sites 'long into the future'; Mohammad Ghalibaf says the Strait of Hormuz 'will never return' to the days of free passage before the conflict

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran said on Tuesday the UN's nuclear watchdog will not be able to inspect key nuclear sites bombed by the U.S. and Israel last year, as the first round of talks to end the war wrapped up in Switzerland.

Tehran and Washington have signed a memorandum of understanding to end a war that sowed chaos across West Asia and rattled the global economy, embarking on a 60-day period to settle broader issues. Diplomacy on that final deal ramped up on Tuesday, with Iran's leader



Destroyed buildings at Isfahan Nuclear Technology Centre after it was hit by U.S. air strikes, in Isfahan, Iran, on June 22, 2025. REUTERS

heading to mediator Pakistan, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio setting off on a tour of Gulf allies, and Lebanon and Israel due for direct talks in Washington.

But Iran denied the claim of U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance that Tehran had agreed to invite International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors

back, after Iran blocked them from nuclear sites struck by its arch foes in a 12-day war last year.

"We have not had a meeting with the director general of the IAEA, nor do we have any plans for the agency to inspect Iran's nuclear facilities damaged by the U.S. and Zionist military aggression," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei told a press briefing.

But U.S. President Donald Trump later said Iran had signed off on comprehensive nuclear inspections.

"Iran has fully and completely agreed to highest level Nuclear inspections

long into the future," he posted on social media.

When the U.S. joined Israel's war with Iran in mid-2025, it bombed nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan.

Iran's UN ambassador Ali Bahreini also told press persons on Tuesday "there hasn't been such a decision" to accept IAEA inspectors.

It came as Tehran's top negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said the strategic Strait of Hormuz "will never return" to the days of free passage before the war, despite both sides agreeing to set up communication lines to keep it open.

Iran-U.S. pact has helped in energy, fertilizer flow: govt.

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

The signing of a 14-point memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Iran and the United States on June 17 has had a positive impact on the flow of energy and fertilizers to India, the External Affairs Ministry said on Tuesday.

At a press briefing here, Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said there had been two-way traffic of India-specific vessels through the Strait of Hormuz at least since June 17, while officials indicate that a permanent pause in hostilities is essential to normalise maritime traffic through the waterway that faced Iran- and U.S.-imposed chokehold for nearly three-and-a-half months.

‘Positive situation’

“Since the signing of the MoU on June 17, 11 India-bound vessels have transited through the Strait of Hormuz. The vessels include three Indian-flagged crude oil tankers, each carrying over 2,85,000 MT [metric tonnes] crude oil; one foreign-flagged LPG carrier, one foreign-flagged crude oil tanker and six foreign-flagged bulk carriers,



Randhir Jaiswal

carrying fertilizer cargo,” said Mr. Jaiswal, indicating that the shipping situation has been positive in the past few days.

“As of today, we have 10 Indian-flagged vessels which are still in the Persian Gulf region. In addition, two have recently arrived there,” said Mr. Jaiswal, further indicating that the 10 ships that remain in the Gulf are part of the international collection of vessels that are stuck in the Persian Gulf since the war erupted between U.S.-Israel and Iran.

“We hope that the remaining Indian-flagged vessels would also be able to cross the Hormuz soon,” added Mr. Jaiswal, explaining that the arrival of vessels indicated that the maritime flow had been helped by the MoU.

'Infosys set to tap into \$400-bn worth AI opportunity by 2030'

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

As the industry is going through a major technology transition, Infosys is collaborating with 90% of its top 200 clients on their AI journey, which positioned the tech major well to tap into an AI-first services opportunity of \$300-400 billion by 2030, said Chairman Nandan Nilekani.

He was addressing shareholders during the company's 45th AGM here on Tuesday. "The AI deployment gap in our large enterprise clients is real, and closing that gap is where the work is. AI will not replace companies like ours. It will amplify those who move with purpose and adapt with speed," Mr. Nilekani said adding that more than three years after GenAI's launch, Infosys remained more relevant than ever and was well-positioned for the decade ahead.

"The defining opportunity lies in integrating intelligent AI systems with mission-critical enterprise platforms. The greatest value will come from combining the world of models and agents with traditional transaction systems that continue to underpin enterprise operations. That convergence is where the next wave of opportunities would emerge," he said.

Mr. Nilekani further said that the AI era required fresh learning and new 'mental models' and the company was systematical-



Nandan Nilekani

ly building talent for the new era.

Infosys recruited more than 20,000 college graduates during FY2026 and ended with a workforce of over 3,25,000 employees, Mr. Nilekani added.

Highlighting the company's performance, he said fiscal 2026 had been a year of disciplined execution and resilience for Infosys, even as the external environment continued to evolve.

The company delivered \$20.2 billion in revenue, growing 3.1% in constant currency, while maintaining a strong adjusted operating margin of 21% and generated \$3.7 billion free cash which is 112.6% of net profit. This was the second consecutive year the company had generated free cash flows of more than 100% of net profit, he said.

"Large deal TCV for fiscal 2026 was at \$14.9 billion, with 55% being net new. This reflects the strong trust our clients have in us and relevance of our strategy, and provides a robust foundation to build on in the months ahead," he explained.