

An-32 cargo plane crash kills 5 IAF men in Assam

Aircraft belonging to the 43 Squadron crashes while attempting to land at the IAF airbase in Jorhat; station sealed after crash, court of inquiry being set up to ascertain cause of the accident, says IAF

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Five Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel were killed after an An-32 cargo aircraft met with an accident while landing at the Jorhat airbase in eastern Assam on Saturday.

The deceased were Squadron Leader Prashant Singh, Flight Lieutenant Shubham Kumar, Sergeant Jitendra Sharma, Agniveervayu Khemaram Kumawat, and Agniveervayu Danish Alam, the IAF said in a statement.

Six personnel were on the plane and the co-pilot is undergoing treatment at a military hospital in Jorhat for injuries, the news agency PTI reported.

The IAF did not provide details of the accident, but said it occurred at 10 a.m.



Landing accident: Security personnel and others near the remains of the An-32 transport aircraft of the IAF that crashed while landing in Jorhat district, Assam, on Saturday. PTI

while the aircraft, belonging to 43 Squadron, was landing at its airbase in the Rowriah area of Jorhat.

“A court of inquiry is being constituted to ascertain the cause of the accident,” the IAF statement read.

The PTI reported that the aircraft was set to fly to Chabua from Jorhat, but requested a landing shortly after taking off.

The aircraft lost control upon touchdown and skidded off the runway, hur-

tling across a parallel taxiway and snapping into two segments before being engulfed in flames, the PTI added, citing sources.

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An-32 cargo plane crash kills 5 IAF men in Assam

A Defence spokesperson said the entire Air Force Station was sealed after the accident, and no entry was allowed.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh mourned the loss of the five airmen. “Their courage and service to the nation will always be remembered with pride and gratitude,” Mr. Singh said.

“On behalf of the people of Assam, I offer my thoughts and prayers with the bereaved families in this hour of grief. The Government of Assam is in touch with the concerned authorities and is ready to offer any support and assistance,” Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma posted on X.

Expressing his condolences to the bereaved families, Assam Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi called for a proper inquiry into the deaths of the five personnel. “I urge the government and the Defence Ministry to conduct a proper inquiry into the mishap and identify the primary cause so that measures are taken to prevent such accidents in the future,” he said in a social media post.

The An-32 is a Soviet-designed twin-engine turboprop transport aircraft. These planes have been serving the IAF as a reliable workhorse for decades, ferrying personnel and air-dropping vital supplies into some of the world’s most demanding terrains.

(With PTI inputs)

Lieutenant-General Dhiraj Seth named next Army Chief

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

The government has appointed Lieutenant-General Dhiraj Seth, serving as the Vice-Chief of the Army Staff, as the next Chief of the Army Staff with effect from the afternoon of June 30.

The present Chief of the Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, retires from service the same day.

Lt. Gen. Seth assumed charge as the Vice-Chief of the Army Staff on April 1, 2026. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, Lt. Gen. Seth was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in 1986. Over a distinguished career spanning nearly four decades, he has served in a variety of oper-



Lieutenant-General Dhiraj Seth

ational environments, including extensive counter-insurgency assignments.

The officer has commanded an armoured regiment in the desert sector, an armoured brigade, and a counter-insurgency force in Jammu and Kashmir. As a Lieutenant-General, he commanded the prestigious Sudarshan Chakra Corps and later served as the General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area.



President Droupadi Murmu with the nine women cadets who were commissioned as officers in the Indian Army, at the Indian Military Academy in Dehradun on Saturday. MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

FIRST TIME, A PERMANENT COMMISSION FOR WOMEN OFFICERS

First batch of NDA-trained women cadets commissioned as officers

Express News Service

Pune, New Delhi, June 13

A YEAR after they walked past the symbolic Antim Pag — the final step — at the NDA in Pune, the first batch of 17 women cadets trained at the NDA was commissioned Saturday as officers, marking a significant milestone in the evolution of women's participation in military service.

This is the first time women officers will be joining the forces with a permanent commission. This was made possible by an interim order passed by the Supreme Court in August 2021, while hearing a plea seeking directions to let eligible women take the NDA and Naval Academy entrance exams conducted by the UPSC.

The first batch of women cadets joined the NDA in July-August 2022 as part of its 148th course.

So far, short service commission women officers could join the forces, and later seek permanent commission after completion of 14 years of service.

The batch of 17 women cadets have successfully completed their rigorous pre-commission training at their respective service academies, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement on Saturday.

"The commissioning marks a defining chapter in the transformation of the Defence Forces and reflects the nation's commitment to equal opportunity, merit and excellence in military service," the statement noted.

In the Indian Army, nine

women officers were commissioned during the Passing Out Parade of 158th Regular Course at IMA, Dehradun, on Saturday.

The parade was reviewed by President Droupadi Murmu.

In the IAF, five officers were commissioned during the Combined Graduation Parade of 217th Course at the Air Force Academy, Dundigal, Hyderabad, on Saturday. The parade was reviewed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

In the Indian Navy, three officers were commissioned during the Spring Term 2026 Passing Out Parade at the Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala, Kerala, on May 28. The parade was reviewed by Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command Vice Admiral Sameer Saxena.

Rajnath praises rise in 'women's strength' in IAF

Indian Air Force sees the commissioning of its first batch of women officers: Defence Minister says Operation Sindoor showed the force's capability to destroy enemy infrastructure with precision

Siddharth Kumar Singh
HYDERABAD

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said the growing participation of women was making the Indian Air Force (IAF) more balanced and robust as the service marked a historic milestone with the commissioning of the first batch of women officers from the National Defence Academy (NDA), Pune, during the Combined Graduation Parade (CGP) of the 217th Course at the Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal, near Hyderabad.

"With the increase of women's strength, our Air Force is becoming more balanced and stronger. This reflects the strength of our inclusive force," Mr. Singh said after reviewing the parade. The women cadets, who had passed out from the NDA on May 30, 2025, underwent branch-specific training at the Air Force Academy before being commissioned. The occasion marked the first time in the history of the IAF that women cadets from the NDA graduated from the academy as officers. A total of five women officers were awarded wings, with two joining the fighter stream and the remaining three joining the maintenance and ground duty branches.

A total of 231 flight ca-



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh awards Wings to a woman cadet at the Air Force Academy in Hyderabad on Saturday. ANI

dets graduated after completing their pre-commissioning training across various branches of the IAF. The graduating batch comprised 194 men and 37 women. Wings were also awarded to nine officers of the Indian Navy, three officers of the Indian Coast Guard and two trainees from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the successful completion of flying training, while three officers received brevets after completing their navigation training.

The Defence Minister presented the President's Plaque to cadets who secured first position in the overall order of merit in the Flying Branch, Navigation stream and Ground

Duty branches.

Flying Officer Ashish Kumar Yadav was awarded the President's Plaque and the Nawanagar Sword of Honour for standing first in the overall order of merit in the Pilot Course. Flying Officer Ekta Gupta received the President's Plaque for securing first position in the Navigation stream, while Flying Officer Divyanshi Singh was awarded the President's Plaque for topping the Ground Duty branches.

Mr. Singh congratulated the cadets and said they were becoming part of a proud legacy built over decades by the Indian Air Force.

Referring to Operation Sindoor, Mr. Singh said the

Air Chief Marshal joins flypast

HYDERABAD

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, provided an unexpected highlight to the Combined Graduation Parade at the Air Force Academy on Saturday by taking part in a three-aircraft Kiran formation flypast above the parade ground. As the distinctive roar of jet engines drew the attention of those gathered to the skies, one of the aircraft in the formation was, to the surprise of many on the ground, being flown by the Air Chief.

Indian Air Force had demonstrated its capability to destroy enemy infrastructure with accuracy and precision. He said the force's achievements had been made possible by indigenous platforms, a strong organisational structure and the contribution of dedicated personnel, and expressed confidence that the Air Force would continue to play a similar role in the future.

Calling upon the officers to understand evolving threats and recalibrate their responses, Mr. Singh said they must remain open to change. "You have to adapt, adopt, and, if necessary, amend. You have to innovate and get an edge in every aspect," he said.

DRDO showcases critical defence technologies in three flight tests

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully demonstrated a range of critical defence technologies through three consecutive flight tests conducted on Wednesday and Thursday, significantly enhancing India's capabilities against diverse aerial and maritime threats.

Defence milestone

According to the Ministry of Defence, the tests showcased a multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system and the maiden flight test of the Naval Anti-Ship Missile-Medium Range (NASM-MR), marking a major milestone in India's indigenous defence technology development.

It further mentioned that the multi-layered BMD capability was successfully demonstrated with inter-



The tests showcased a multi-layered ballistic missile defence system and the anti-ship missile. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Defence Minister congratulated the DRDO and associated teams on the successful tests

ceptor missiles engaging and destroying their designated targets.

The systems, developed using advanced technologies, are designed to counter emerging missile

threats across a broad spectrum.

Anti-ship missile

The successful trials have placed India among a select group of countries possessing BMD capabilities capable of engaging threats up to Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, significantly strengthening the country's strategic defence shield.

In another key achieve-

ment, DRDO successfully carried out the maiden flight test of the Naval Anti-Ship Missile-Medium Range (NASM-MR), demonstrating enhanced anti-ship strike capability at medium ranges.

The flight tests were witnessed by senior officials of DRDO and the Armed Forces.

Rajnath lauds DRDO

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO and associated teams for the successful demonstration of the crucial technologies, stating that the achievements would further strengthen India's defence preparedness.

Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO, Rajesh Kumar Singh, closely monitored the trials and lauded the combined efforts of DRDO scientists, industry partners and the Armed Forces in achieving the milestone.

No new Aadhaar cards for adults in Assam without special verification process

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

The Assam Cabinet has decided to stop Aadhaar cards being issued in the State through the regular enrolment process to people aged 18 and above.

The decision is aimed at preventing illegal immigrants from obtaining the unique identification number, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday.

He said the Cabinet approved a ban on fresh Aadhaar enrolment in Assam for adults except for people with disabilities and those from Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and tea garden communities.

The exemption for applicants in these categories will remain valid until March 2027. "The restrictions will not apply to individuals below 18 years of age," the Chief Minister said.

According to the blueprint, any "genuine" per-



Himanta Biswa Sarma

son aged 18 or above seeking an Aadhaar card will now have to undergo a special verification process through the office of the District Commissioner concerned.

In such cases, the District Commissioner will be required to submit a proposal to the government, which will take the final call on processing Aadhaar cards.

The Chief Minister said Aadhaar cards were still being issued although Assam has reached Aadhaar enrolment saturation, with some districts recording issuance of up to 115%.

"As Assam has already achieved 100% Aadhaar saturation, there are apprehensions over who is taking Aadhaar cards. We want no illegal immigrant to acquire an Aadhaar," Mr. Sarma said.

Prevent 'leakage'

The Chief Minister added that the intention was to stop the "leakage" in the issuance of Aadhaar.

The Assam Cabinet also approved the implementation framework of the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act (VB-G RAM G), 2025, for the State. It will be implemented from July 1.

"The budget allocation for the Act is ₹2,000 crore, and 125 man-days will be provided for direct wage employment under the Act. Moreover, under the Act, besides providing employment, importance will be given to creating assets as a result of the man-days," a government statement said.

REBELLION AGAINST MAMATA GATHERS STEAM

TMC closer to split as heavyweight MP joins rebels, holds talks with BJP

Their count now 20, rebels to ask Speaker they be counted as a separate bloc

Manoj CG

New Delhi, June 13

IN A shot in the arm for the rebel faction of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) MPs, veteran party leader and six-time MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay Saturday signalled that he could join them as the dissidents prepare to meet Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday to urge him to recognise them as a separate bloc and allow them to sit alongside the MPs of the ruling BJP-led NDA in the House.

The development has caused a fresh setback for TMC

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Not just at top, cracks at grassroots amid anger against 'syndicates'

Abhishek's backyard to Kolkata and Bardhaman, *The Indian Express* tracks crumbling of TMC networks

Ravik Bhattacharya & Atri Mitra

Sonarpur, Kolkata, Jamalpur, June 13

A SMALL office made of asbestos and tin, in the blue and white colours of the Trinamool Congress, along the bustling Sonarpur Railway Station in South 24 Parganas, now sports a new look. Hoisted on it is a saffron banner saying 'Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangha, Sarbabrihat trade union, Sonarpur block'.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



A closed TMC office at Kamrabad in Sonarpur; a building linked to a TMC strongman in Belegkata being demolished. PARTHA PAUL

Rebel bloc

E. EXPLAINED

chief Mamata Banerjee, with the party unravelling in the wake of its debacle in the recent West Bengal Assembly elections.

Bandyopadhyay landed in Delhi along with rebel TMC MP Satabdi Roy, following which they were seen entering the official residence of Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, who was the BJP's in-charge for the Bengal polls. A group of dissident TMC MPs also had a meeting at Yadav's residence earlier this week.

According to reports, Bandyopadhyay later also met Union Home Minister Amit Shah. While Bandyopadhyay did not make any comments, and the details of his meeting with the BJP leadership were not immediately known, the signal from the rebel TMC camp was that they had managed to enlist his support. Bandyopadhyay's wife Nayna Bandyopadhyay is a TMC MLA in Bengal.

The rebel camp on Friday claimed that they have the sup-

Next move

The dissident TMC MPs will meet West Bengal CM Suvendu Adhikari in Delhi Sunday. They are also set to meet LS Speaker Om Birla Monday to urge him to recognise them as a separate bloc and allow them to sit alongside the members of the ruling NDA in the House.

port of 19 MPs, which account for two-thirds of the party's Lok Sabha strength of 28 members. If Bandyopadhyay, a former leader of the TMC parliamentary party in the Lower House, joins them, their number would rise to 20.

The TMC leadership had last August appointed the party national general secretary and Diamond Harbour MP, Abhishek Banerjee, Mamata's nephew, as its new parliamentary party leader in the Lok Sabha, replacing Bandopadhyay. He has been grappling with health issues for

some time. Sources in the dissident camp said they are slated to have a meeting with West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari in Delhi Sunday before meeting Speaker Birla on Monday in a bid to formally break away from the TMC and form a separate bloc. The TMC is currently the third largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha after the Congress and the Samajwadi Party.

The rebel MPs want the Speaker to recognise them as the "real TMC". Mamata has already lost control of her Legislature Party in Bengal after about 60 of the party's 80 MLAs formed a separate bloc and elected Ritabrata Banerjee as their leader.

Hours after Sudip's meeting with Bhupender Yadav, the TMC leadership removed him from his post as the party's North Kolkata district president, replacing him with Mamata loyalist and MLA Kunal Ghosh. Sudip represents Kolkata Uttar in Lok Sabha. The TMC also removed another rebel MP Saayoni Ghosh as the party's youth wing chief.

**- WITH INPUTS FROM
ATRI MITRA, KOLKATA**

Why an Assam-Nagaland pact raises hopes of higher oil & gas output from Northeast

Sukalp Sharma

New Delhi, June 13

THE UNION government, Assam and Nagaland Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that paves the way for the resumption of oil and gas exploration along the resource-rich and contested boundary of the two states after three decades.

The Northeast is considered the birthplace of India's oil and gas industry and Assam is among India's major oil and gas producing states.

This agreement is part of that effort, and comes at a time when the country is grappling with high prices of imported oil and gas, as well as supply constraints, owing to the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid the West Asia war.

The government has implemented several policy reforms to encourage investments in India's oil and gas exploration and production sector.

Resumption of oil, gas exploration in contested border

Although these "upstream" activities have long gestation periods, the agreement could augment the country's domestic oil and gas production in the medium to long term. According to officials aware of

the matter, the MoU specifically targets the disputed area belt, or DAB, along the Assam-Nagaland border. With the MoU in place, oil and gas exploration and production are expected to gather pace across more than 1,000 sq km along the Assam-Nagaland border.

Oil, gas, and mineral exploration activities have remained suspended in the DAB for three decades owing to law and order issues amid boundary disputes between the two states.

The DAB is expected to contain promising hydrocarbon prospects. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the MoU establishes a coordinated framework for facilitating mineral oil operations in the area, ensuring operational continuity, safety and security of personnel and assets, and effective coordination among all stakeholders.

The framework is expected to support exploration and production activities, encourage investment in the upstream petroleum sector and contribute towards the country's energy security objectives, it said.

The MHA said that both states decided that they would not allow any obstacle to India's oil exploration, and would advance on the path of mutual cooperation, as these resources constitute national wealth.

According to the MHA re-



Oil, gas, and mineral exploration activities have remained suspended in the contested area for three decades now. REUTERS

lease, apart from six designated oil and gas fields, the Nagaland government has agreed to oil exploration across Nagaland.

"He (Home Minister Amit Shah) stated that the Government of Assam is also in agreement, as this is a win-win situation for all stakeholders. The Home Minister said that this tripartite agreement will pave the way for mineral exploration and mining across the entire North-East region," the release said.

Govt sees significant oil, gas potential in region

"Since Assam alone accounts for nearly 22% of India's crude oil reserves and around 15% of the country's natural gas

reserves, while Nagaland possesses significant hydrocarbon potential in the Naga-Schuppen Belt of the Assam-Arakan Basin, resources where hydrocarbons flow naturally and those which have huge un-

E.

tapped resources, the outlook for E&P [exploration and production] activities in the North East is therefore extremely promising," Pe-

troleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri posted on social media platform X, adding that the MoU paves the way for Nagaland to produce oil and gas after 31 years. According to the MHA release, Shah said that the MoU could potentially help increase oil production capacity from the Northeast from the current capacity of 1,000-1,500 barrels per day by more than

tenfold, adding that the region also possesses "an immense wealth of minerals". While it is difficult to predict exactly how soon this tripartite agreement would start bearing fruit, Shah emphasised that in due course, it will bring significant relief to India and enhance the country's self-reliance.

"Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah expressed confidence that the extraction of oil and gas resources available in Nagaland would significantly reduce India's dependence on foreign sources in this sector. He said that, in the absence of such an agreement and due to certain longstanding challenges, the economic development of both states had remained affected for a considerable period.

"However, he noted that the agreement signed today will open a major pathway for the economic development of both Assam and Nagaland," the MHA release said.

"By creating a framework for cooperation between the governments, this MoU signed in the presence of HM Sh @AmitShah Ji, provides certainty to investors, facilitates operational continuity, enables regulatory coordination and creates conditions necessary for long-term investment decisions," Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

Will not allow illegal shipments of Iranian oil, U.S. govt. tells India

Secretary of State Rubio's warning came during discussions with Jaishankar; Minister says he reiterated India's strong protest at the U.S. attack on ships; Tharoor asks how a 'friend and strategic partner' can be so deeply insensitive to India

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

On Friday, after India summoned U.S. Embassy representative Jason Meeks and lodged its "strong protest" against the missile attacks on ships carrying Indian crew, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar that violations of the American blockade and "illicit transport of Iranian oil" would not be tolerated.

Recalling his discussion with Mr. Rubio, Mr. Jaishankar posted on X: "I reiterated India's strong protest at the attacks by the U.S. Navy in the Gulf that killed three Indian mariners. Such lethal actions against commercial shipping are not justified."

The two discussed the Strait of Hormuz situation following the U.S. missile strikes on three vessels – *Marivex* near Duqm, and *Settebello* and *Jalveer* near



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in New Delhi in May. PTI

Shinas – that killed three Indian seafarers off the Oman coast.

The U.S. State Department said Mr. Rubio further told Mr. Jaishankar that "all commercial vessels should immediately comply with orders from U.S. forces as they seek to uphold peace and security in the Strait".

The divergence between the two nations on

this issue comes ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump in France on the sidelines of the G7 summit next week, according to a White House statement.

'Are Indians fair game?' Shashi Tharoor, head of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, in a post on X said

the U.S. statement "contains absolutely no expression of regret or condolence for the loss of innocent Indian lives. How can a "friend" and strategic partner be so deeply insensitive? Is it not possible to disable a ship's propulsion or steering without firing missiles targeted to kill civilian crew members? Practically every merchant ship navigating these crucial waters has Indian crew on board. Are they all considered fair game for US missiles now?"

U.S. claim disputed

The U.S. Central Command has maintained that the crew of all three vessels had "repeatedly failed to comply with directions from U.S. forces". It described *Marivex* as attempting to sail to an Iranian port.

Marivex was attacked at anchorage off Duqm some 420 nautical miles from the Strait. *Marinetraffic.com* has tracked *Marivex*

loitering in the same area for nearly a week before the June 8 strike.

Settebello's management company, IOS Marine FZE, had flatly contradicted the Centcom account, stating that no warnings were issued and no communication was established with the U.S. Navy. Demanding evidence of the claimed communication from the U.S. Navy, it said the vessel had been stationary off Shinas port for nearly 10 days.

Meanwhile, Manoj Yadav, general secretary of the Forward Seamen's Union of India who had received the statement from IOS Marine and posted it on X, has urged the Indian government to deploy naval and intelligence support for Indian-associated vessels in the region, deepen diplomatic engagement with Oman so as to support merchant shipping in the area, and issue clear guidance for ships operating in high-risk areas.

'UAE agrees to unlock billions of dollars for Iran amid deal talks'

Two regional sources say the Gulf Arab state has agreed to release a total of \$10 billion; the UAE officially denies the report, calling claims of any transfer of funds 'entirely false and unfounded'; Vance says funds won't be released for signing a deal

Reuters

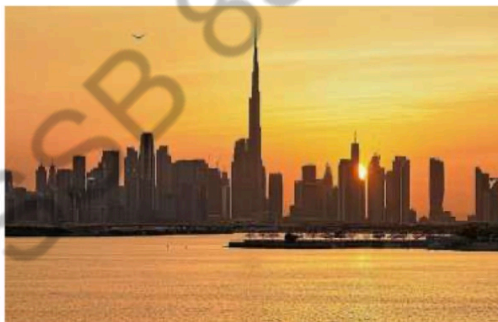
DUBAI/LONDON

The United Arab Emirates has agreed to unlock billions of dollars for Iran, four sources said, in a tactical shift after weeks of Iranian attacks on the wealthy Gulf Arab state during the U.S.-Israeli war with the Islamic Republic. Word of the move, which has not been previously reported, coincides with the final stages of broader negotiations between Tehran and Washington on ending the war, talks that diplomats say could involve the release of tens of billions of dollars in Iranian oil reve-

nues frozen in foreign banks under U.S. sanctions.

Two regional sources told Reuters the UAE had agreed to release a total of \$10 billion, more than \$3 billion of which had already been delivered. Two other sources with knowledge of the arrangement put the total funds involved at \$20 billion, adding that the move had been agreed in return for a halt to Iranian attacks on the UAE.

One of the sources with knowledge of the arrangement also said a first tranche of \$3 billion had already been made available. Reuters could not establish



Time out: The move had been agreed in return for a halt to Iranian attacks on the United Arab Emirates, say sources. AP

whether the funds earmarked for the transfers belong to the UAE or originate in long-blocked Iranian accounts in the UAE banking system, or else-

where. The UAE Foreign Ministry issued a statement early on Saturday categorically denying reports of the transfer "including allegations concerning \$3

billion". The UAE statement "affirmed that these allegations are entirely false and unfounded, stressing that no frozen Iranian funds have been released, transferred or facilitated through the UAE."

The White House did not respond to a request for comment on the move. In Washington, Vice-President J.D. Vance said on Friday that funds would not be released to Iran for signing a deal with the United States or attending a meeting, adding that the potential deal is structured to ensure that economic benefits would flow to Tehran if it meets its obligations.

China flays Pentagon move against Chinese tech firms

Reuters

BEIJING



China is “strongly dissatisfied” with a U.S. move to add several large Chinese companies to the Pentagon’s list of firms it says are aiding China’s military, the Commerce Ministry said on Saturday.

The Foreign Ministry has also expressed concern about the U.S. Defense Department’s long-awaited update to its list on Monday, which included such top technology names as e-commerce giant Alibaba, Internet search provider Baidu and automakers BYD and NIO.

It later added the world’s largest solar panel makers to the list: Trina Solar and JA Solar Technology.

The list includes a broad

China urges the U.S. to immediately stop its erroneous practices, withdraw relevant measures and return to the correct track of building a constructive strategic and stable China-U.S. relationship

COMMERCE MINISTRY OF CHINA

swathe of China’s top technology firms key to advancing Beijing’s military and industrial prowess, reflecting Washington’s security concerns amid intense geopolitical competition between the countries.

“China is strongly dissatisfied and firmly opposes

this,” the Commerce Ministry said in a statement. “China urges the U.S. to immediately stop its erroneous practices, immediately withdraw relevant measures and return to the correct track of building a constructive strategic and stable China-U.S. relationship.”

If Chinese firms are not treated fairly, it said, Beijing will “inevitably retaliate resolutely and forcefully”.

The Pentagon update supersedes a list from early 2025 and comes a month after Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping met in Beijing and maintained a delicate trade-war truce.

The Ministry statement said the Pentagon’s move “ignored the consensus” reached between the two leaders.

Europe defence in focus as NATO prepares for a reduced US role

Associated Press

Brussels, June 13

NATO'S TOP military officer is weighing alternative plans to defend Europe should it come under attack from Russia, after United States announced that it is cutting the number of aircraft and warships that it would provide in a security crisis.

The so-called NATO Force Model is Plan A for making forces from the 32 member nations available in times of peace, crisis or war. It sets out the military assets that commanders can call on in phases over the first six months of any conflict.

But last month, the Pentagon warned its NATO allies that it would be scaling down its commitment to focus on potential threats elsewhere, notably from China in the Indo-Pacific region.

The reduction in available American military assets include an aircraft carrier strike



F/A 18 Hornet multi-role fighter jets take off from a road strip during NATO's Ramstein Flag 26 exercise in Trevo, Finland. FILE

group as well as a number of submarines, fighter jets, maritime patrol aircraft, air refueling planes and drones, according to a NATO official who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke Friday on the condition of anonymity.

However, US space capabilities that help with targeting would still be available.

European countries and Canada had waited impatiently for over a year for the Trump administration to detail its plans after it warned that Europe is no longer atop US security priority. US Gen Alex Grynke, NATO's supreme allied commander, said that "the US is still committed to providing limited but critical capabilities to the alliance.