



Rupee falls 28 paise to close at 96.53 against U.S. dollar

The rupee depreciated by 28 paise to close at 96.53 against the U.S. dollar on Wednesday, weighed down by surging crude oil prices and heightened geopolitical uncertainty. Forex traders said risk aversion in global markets and a negative trend in domestic equities further dented investor sentiment. **At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 96.36 against the U.S. dollar and traded in the range of 96.25 to 96.60 during the day.** PTI

India underlines supply chain and market access with Wang

Shubhajit Roy

New Delhi, July 22

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and conveyed India's concerns on "predictability of supply chain", "market access" and facilitating "official and people-to-people exchanges". He also underlined that "peace and tranquility in the border areas" is the prerequisite for normal ties — Delhi's position on the border standoff for the last six years.

Calling it a "wide-ranging conversation", Jaishankar — who met Wang on the sidelines of the East Asia and ASEAN foreign ministers' meetings — gave a broader context to the meeting: "We ourselves met a year ago and you were recently in India. Today's occasion will be useful in taking stock of our ties and also discussing important regional and global developments." Wang had visited India in June. Underlining the Indian approach towards engaging with China since the border standoff began in May 2020, Jaishankar said, "We believe that a stable and cooperative relationship can best be developed on the basis of mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity. Such a relationship can make a valuable contribution to a multipolar Asia and a multipolar world."

"Peace and tranquility in the border areas is obviously the prerequisite for normal ties. Since October 2024, both sides have engaged to ensure that important objective. This will continue to need our constant attention. Relevant mechanisms in this domain must be given full support and strong encouragement," Jaishankar said. He referred to the India-



S Jaishankar with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. ANI

China agreement on disengagement, which was agreed in October 2024 and completed in November 2024.

In October 2024, India and China firmed up a disengagement pact for Depsang and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh. The two sides withdrew their troops from several friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

"Since the meeting of our leaders in Kazan in October 2024, relations between India and China have been gradually normalizing. This direction was further affirmed when they met in Tianjin last August," Jaishankar said.

Giving the overall strategic context, the External Affairs Minister said, "It is natural that as two large and important nations, and that too proximate neighbours, India and China would have their own particular interests. That is why our leaders had agreed that differences should not become disputes. It is the responsibility of diplomacy to properly manage them." He was flagging the Indian approach on "differences

E. EXPLAINED

Cementing ties, but challenges remain

IN AUGUST last year, at a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Tianjin, PM Modi had said India is committed to taking forward its ties with China based on mutual trust, respect and sensitivity. Since then, while solid progress has been made, certain challenges remain, including the unresolved border issue.

should not become disputes" since the 2017 BRICS summit in Xiamen.

"The steps in normalization taken over the last few months must be welcomed. This includes resumption of direct flights, updating of the visa regime, restarting the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, and re-commencing border trade," Jaishankar said.

Elaborating on the challenges the relationship is facing, he said, "However, there are also important dimensions of our ties that need to be addressed. Fair market access and a trade balance rank high in that regard. There are also concerns about predictability of supply chains. Facilitating both official and people-to-people exchanges merit our attention. We also need to agree on the meetings of various mechanisms and platforms as per our mutual priorities."

China overtook the US as India's largest trading partner in 2025-26, with total bilateral trade reaching \$151.1 billion.



S Jaishankar with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. ANI

US says interim trade deal almost ready as Jaishankar meets Rubio in Philippines

Shubhajit Roy

New Delhi, July 22

THE INTERIM trade deal between India and the US is “almost complete” and Secretary of State Marco Rubio is likely to visit India before the end of the year, US officials said on Wednesday after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met America’s top diplomat in Manila.

After an interaction on the sidelines of the ASEAN and East Asia meetings, Jaishankar posted on X: “Pleased to meet @SecRubio of the USA here in Manila. Our meeting focused on areas which are priority for the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, including trade & tariffs, energy, defence & security, critical minerals & artificial intelligence.”

“We also exchanged quick perspectives on regional, global and multilateral issues of mutual interest,” he said, referring to the wars in West Asia and Ukraine.

US State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott said, “Secretary Rubio met today with Indian External Affairs

Minister Jaishankar in Manila... discussed recent developments in the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific.”

“The Secretary and Minister Jaishankar discussed finalizing key defence agreements in fulfillment of commitments made between President Trump and Prime Minister Modi last year. (They) agreed on the importance of finalizing the interim trade deal, which is almost complete,” he said.

US Ambassador to India Sergio Gorr, who was also present at the meeting, said, “A very productive bilateral meeting between @SecRubio and @DrSJaisankar on the sidelines of ASEAN. In fact, Secretary Rubio might be coming back to India later this year... stay tuned.”

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced plans to onshore drug manufacturing by keeping tariffs on imported generic medicines at zero percent for two years before raising them to 100 per cent in August 2028 and 200 per cent thereafter – a move that could impact India.

India is the largest exporter of generic drugs to the US.

With eye on China, Quad commits to strengthen 'free & open Indo-Pacific'

Foreign Minister stresses on ASEAN centrality, Rubio says Quad remains a priority for US

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, July 22

WITH AN eye on China's assertive behaviour in the region, the Quad foreign ministers committed to ASEAN's centrality and vowed to pursue peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific maritime domain.

This was one of the main takeaways from the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila on Wednesday, which was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi.

After the meeting, Jaishankar posted on X: "Glad to participate in the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila. Reviewed the Indo-Pacific landscape and discussed recent developments. Followed up on the outcomes of the recent New



(From Left) Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong during the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila on Wednesday. ANI

Delhi meeting. Committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific with a recognition of ASEAN centrality."

Rubio said, "Was pleased to reconvene the Quad at the @ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting to emphasize our message: strong cooperation is vital to supporting ASEAN's own priority and centrality in the region."

"The United States, India, Australia, and Japan share a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific that is grounded in the

rule of law, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The Quad remains a priority, and we will meet again later this year," he said.

According to the joint statement issued after the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, "As ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partners, we, the Secretary of State of the United States and the Foreign Ministers of Australia, India, and Japan, met today in Manila to reaffirm our commitment to strengthening a free and open

Indo-Pacific and our unwavering support for ASEAN unity and centrality."

"We are deeply invested in the region's success and in cooperating with ASEAN and its member states," it said.

"We discussed regional challenges and opportunities to strengthen our support for the practical implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) through our shared priorities of maritime and transnational security, economic prosperity and secur-

ity, critical and emerging technologies, and humanitarian assistance and emergency response," the statement said, adding: "We are united in our conviction that peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific maritime domain underpin the security and prosperity of the region."

The Japanese foreign ministry said the Quad meeting confirmed that the grouping will continue advancing "concrete cooperation" to realise a free and open Indo-Pacific that focuses on maritime and transnational security, economic prosperity and security.

Motegi said Wednesday's meeting sends a strong message that Quad is committed to promoting cooperation that benefits the region. "The four ministers confirmed that the Quad will continue to advance concrete cooperation to realise a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)," a Japanese statement said. Motegi shared strong opposition to "any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion and grave concerns over export restrictions, including on critical minerals, and emphasised the commitment to the complete denuclearisation of North Korea," the statement noted.

Citing security reasons, 16 Metro stations shut from noon to evening

Devansh Mittal
New Delhi, July 22

THOUSANDS OF commuters faced long delays and detours on Wednesday after the Delhi Metro shut entry and exit at 16 stations across Central Delhi for around eight hours citing security reasons.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) announced shortly before noon that, entry and exit would remain closed at Lok Kalyan Marg, Rajiv Chowk, Patel Chowk, Ramakrishna Ashram Marg, Barakhambha Road, Supreme Court, Seva Teerth, Janpath, Mandi House, Central Secretariat, ITO, Delhi Gate, Indraprastha, Khan Market, Jor Bagh and Shivaji Stadium.

Around 4.40 pm, Jhandewalan station was also closed. All stations were reopened by 6.30 pm.

This comes two days after the Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) march towards Parliament demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation, with crowds continuing to gather at Jantar Mantar on Wednesday.

Rajiv Chowk, Janpath and Patel Chowk are among the closest Metro stations to Jantar



Commuters wait outside the closed Mandi House Metro station on Wednesday. TASHI TOBGYAL

Mantar. The maximum number of stations were closed on the Blue Line.

The closure of ITO and Central Secretariat stations impacted many office-goers, especially since several government offices are located

in these areas.

Rajiv Chowk and Central Secretariat, two of the busiest stations in the network, remained open only for interchange, allowing passengers to switch lines but not enter or exit. Interchange facilities were

also available at Mandi House.

Rajiv Chowk is the interchange between the Yellow and Blue Lines, which together account for nearly half of the Delhi Metro's ridership.

The Yellow Line, connecting Delhi with Gurgaon, carried

about a quarter of the network's passengers in 2025, while the Blue Line, linking Delhi to Noida, accounted for around 21%. The Delhi Metro records around 65-70 lakh passenger journeys every day.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said closing Metro stations was wrong and attempts to stop students and protesters would only strengthen the movement. "Even if you close all the Metro stations, they will walk. These are young people. It will be good for the government to listen to these young protesters," the former Delhi chief minister said.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor also criticised the government's handling of the situation, saying it should have engaged with the students instead of closing Metro station exits.

"That was really a bad idea. It was really very badly done. Walloping students like this in the middle of the street.... This is just shocking. And honestly, I just don't understand the government's attitude to all of this," he said. "Is this what the world's largest democracy looks like," Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra asked.

Delhi HC seeks govt. response on police actions during CJP march

Petitioners warn against unchecked police action, flag use of lathis with nails, electric batons, pellet guns during the July 20 protest march; allegations can't be dismissed as 'isolated incidents', says court; it orders preservation of CCTV, video footage

Soibam Rocky Singh
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre and the Delhi Police to respond to a batch of public interest litigation (PIL) petitions alleging that the police used excessive force against students and other protesters during the Parliament march called by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on July 20.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia observed that the allegations could not be brushed aside as "isolated incidents", and ordered that all relevant material, including CCTV footage and videography, related to the march be preserved in accordance with the standard operating procedures of the Delhi Police.

Appearing for one of the petitioners, senior advocate N. Hariharan alleged that the protesters were subjected to "brutality to the largest extent" by the state machinery. "There are videos of several people in civil clothes carrying lathis, lathis with nails, electric batons, and pellet guns. There is not a whisp-



Staying put: CJP protesters at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Wednesday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

er that anybody in the march was violent," he submitted.

Mr. Hariharan further alleged that some policemen could be seen molesting women. "There are policemen molesting women, using baton... It is so ghastly," he said, seeking the registration of FIRs against identifiable officers, and a high-level inquiry into the incident. According to him, more than 90 people had suffered injuries, with the number continuing to rise.

Senior advocate Gopal

Sankaranarayanan, appearing in one of the petitions, alleged that a large number of police personnel were deployed without nameplates and they used batons not authorised by the Delhi Police. Warning against unchecked police action, Mr. Sankaranarayanan submitted, "If constitutional courts do not intervene, it would amount to giving the police a licence to get away with anything because they have the sanction of their political masters."

Additional Solicitor-

General S.V. Raju alleged that the agitation had turned violent, with the protesters throwing stones and injuring police personnel. Lawyers representing the petitioners, however, said the police action was unwarranted and brutal, warning that the courts must step in to hold the police accountable.

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DON'T WASTE OUR TIME: CJI

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Ministers meet Wangchuk as govt. steps up outreach

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday moved up a notch its engagement with protesters against the NEET paper leak, with Union Ministers J.P. Nadda and Jitendra Singh meeting activist Sonam Wangchuk, who responded from hospital with a statement that he was willing to call off the hunger strike if the government gave an assurance that no punitive action would be taken against the protesting students. » **PAGE 12**

Rahul seeks to mollify allies, put pressure on govt.

NEW DELHI

Opposition needs to step up pressure on the government, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi said on Wednesday as he reassured INDIA bloc allies that the Congress believes in better coordination between them. His remarks came as several allies were reportedly upset over not being kept in the loop about the Congress's dharna at the Prime Minister's residence. » **PAGE 13**

'Stable India-China ties will help build multi-polar Asia'

Peace and tranquillity in the border areas is pre-requisite for normal ties, says Jaishankar during talks with Wang Yi; Minister raises safety of Indian seafarers during discussion with Sergey Lavrov

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Stable India-China relations will help foster a "multi-polar Asia" and a "multi-polar world", External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said during a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Manila.

The meeting took place before the Foreign Ministers of the Quad countries, Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S., met on the sidelines of the 59th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in the Philippine capital and reiterated their support for stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

In a separate meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, held days after four Indian seafarers were killed in a Russian projectile strike in the Black Sea, Mr. Jaishankar expressed "strong concern" regarding the safety of Indian seafarers.

"We believe that a stable and cooperative relationship can best be developed on the basis of mutual res-



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Manila on Wednesday. PTI

pect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity. Such a relationship can make a valuable contribution to a multi-polar Asia and a multi-polar world," Mr. Jaishankar said in his remarks, highlighting that "peace and tranquillity in the border areas is obviously the pre-requisite for normal ties".

The comments came against the backdrop of renewed India-China engagement, including the resumption of direct flights, updates to the visa regime, the restart of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, and the resumption of border trade. In this context, Mr.

Jaishankar said, "... the steps in normalisation taken over the last few months must be welcomed." He referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping's meeting in Kazan in October 2024 and recalled that the two leaders had "agreed that differences should not become disputes". He also raised the importance of "predictability of supply chains" and "fair market access", which need to be addressed.

The India-China ministerial discussion was followed by the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the

Quad countries that reiterated their support for stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The External Affairs Ministry issued a joint press release on cooperation between the Quad members and the ASEAN countries, stating, "As ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partners we, the Secretary of State of the United States and the Foreign Ministers of Australia, India and Japan met today in Manila to reaffirm our commitment to strengthening a free and open Indo-Pacific and our unwavering support for ASEAN unity and centrality."

Mr. Jaishankar held an "in-depth review" of India-Russia bilateral relations with Mr. Lavrov and expressed "strong concern regarding the safety of Indian seafarers in the region".

"Discussed various aspects of our partnership including trade and investment, energy and connectivity, science and technology and mobility," said Mr. Jaishankar about his meeting with Mr. Lavrov.

Trump's 200% generic tariff threat would imperil Americans: Indian pharma

N. Ravi Kumar

HYDERABAD

U.S. President Donald Trump has given generic pharmaceutical companies a two-year window to establish manufacturing facilities in the United States, warning that products imported after August 2028 could face tariffs of up to 200%.

The announcement, made on Wednesday through a social media post, has significant implications for India, which sends more than a third of its pharmaceutical exports to the U.S. While Indian drugmakers sought to strike a cautious note, they warned that higher tariffs would ultimately increase medicine costs for American consumers.

Mr. Trump said the measure is intended to encourage generic drug production in the U.S. and reduce dependence on overseas supply chains.

"Effective August 1, 2026, all generic drugs being brought into the United States will continue to have a tariff of zero per cent for a two-year period of time, after which the tariff will be raised to 100% for a one-year period of time, and 200% thereafter," he said. The announcement rattled pharmaceutical stocks. The Nifty Pharma index fell 1.31%, with 18 of its 20 constituent companies closing lower.

"It's not practical to move operations like that to the U.S. overnight. If ta-

Indian companies account for nearly 47% of all generic prescriptions dispensed in the U.S.

riffs are imposed, we will have to raise prices," said Dr. Reddy's Laboratories CEO Erez Israeli. He added that the company was not planning any immediate changes and noted that policy positions could evolve over time.

'India most exposed'

According to the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), India is among the countries most exposed to the proposed measure. India exported pharmaceutical products worth \$25.8 billion in 2025, of which \$9.7 billion, or 37.7%, went to the U.S. its largest overseas market.

Indian firms account for nearly 47% of all generic prescriptions dispensed in the U.S., making India the largest supplier of affordable generic medicines.

Despite this dominance, generics' low pricing means India's share of the value of U.S. generic imports is estimated at only about 30%.

The U.S. imported pharmaceutical products worth \$213 billion in 2025, including \$94.1 billion worth of finished medicines sold in retail packs. GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said many Indian generics could remain competitive despite the tariffs because they are

significantly cheaper than branded alternatives. However, large-scale relocation of generic drug manufacturing to the U.S. would be challenging, given the industry's reliance on global supply chains and imported active pharmaceutical ingredients.

Granules India Executive Director Priyanka Chigurupati said the company's three U.S. facilities position it well to support increased local manufacturing. However, she cautioned that higher generic drug prices could ripple across the healthcare system and affect patient affordability.

Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance Secretary General Sudarshan Jain said Indian companies already have a substantial U.S. presence, with more than 40 facilities supporting jobs, manufacturing and research. India, he said, remains a trusted partner in supplying affordable, quality medicines to American patients. GTRI added that building a fully domestic pharmaceutical supply chain in the U.S. would require significant investment and would almost certainly lead to higher medicine prices.

"The zero-tariff window gives the industry a meaningful runway, and we see this as time we can use productively – to keep strengthening our position across multiple markets rather than relying on any single one," said Pharmexcil Chairman Namit Joshi.

U.S. to announce nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON

The United States plans to announce a landmark deal with Saudi Arabia on Wednesday that would help establish a civilian nuclear programme in the kingdom, according to media reports.

The move comes as Washington fights a war with Iran that began in part over U.S. concerns with Tehran's own nuclear program – an issue that remains a key point of contention during now-stalled talks between the two foes.

The New York Times, citing two unidentified U.S. officials, reported on Tuesday that the Trump admini-

nistration planned to formally sign and announce the deal with the Saudis on Wednesday.

President Donald Trump's administration said the agreement would provide billions of dollars for the U.S. nuclear industry.

A provision in the 30-year deal would potentially see U.S. companies build a uranium enrichment facility in Saudi Arabia, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

However, U.S. lawmakers from both parties and Israeli officials have voiced opposition to a civilian nuclear project for Saudi Arabia over fears it could be converted to eventually develop nuclear weapons.

Saudis reach deal with US that could let them enrich uranium

Crown Prince says Saudi would build nukes if Iran does

David E Sanger, Edward Wong & William J Broad
Washington, Manila, July 22

THE TRUMP administration plans to announce Wednesday that it has reached a broad nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia that could lead to the country enriching its own fuel for nuclear reactors, US officials said.

The accord is intended to further bind United States with Saudi government as the war with Iran strains the relationship. The Trump administration, according to officials, estimates that it will provide billions of dollars for US nuclear industry — starting with Westinghouse, which designs many of the reactors sold abroad.

The Trump administration plans to formally sign and announce the agreement with the Saudis on Wednesday, said two US officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomacy. It

would announce the details to Congress soon afterward.

Although the agreement likely would have support among many Republicans, some US lawmakers from both parties along with Israeli officials have expressed opposition to such a plan, fearing that the kingdom could use a civilian nuclear project to eventually develop nuclear weapons.

The accord has been under discussion for years, and during the Biden administration it was envisioned as part of a broader deal that would include Saudi diplomatic recognition of Israel.

But after the October 7, 2023, attacks on Israel by Hamas, that prospect receded. President Donald Trump separated the proposal for US-Saudi civilian nuclear cooperation from any demand that Saudi Arabia recognize Israel.

The agreement will require review by Congress, which under the Atomic Energy Act has the power to vote a resolution of disapproval. But as a practical matter, the agreement would likely pass, because Congress would have to assemble a veto-proof majority to override Trump's initiative.

Nonetheless, debate over the accord is likely to be fierce. To get the deal done with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country's 40-year-old de facto leader, Trump had to agree to terms that may limit international inspectors from going to any sites in the country that they think could be a pathway to diverting fuel to weapons projects.

And he agreed that, after a joint study with Saudi Arabia on the economics of producing nuclear fuel, the Saudis may be allowed to enrich uranium or reprocess plutonium on their soil.

The *Wall Street Journal* re-

ported Tuesday night Trump had approved the agreement.

Crown Prince Mohammed has vowed he would build nuclear weapons if Iran does so, even insisting he would do so "without a doubt."

Iran has had a nuclear program that it says is intended for civilian use, though it has enriched uranium to near weapons grade following Trump's withdrawal in 2018 from an Obama-era nuclear deal. Trump ordered US forces to join with Israel to attack Iran's nuclear sites in June 2025, and to start a war against Iran this February. *NYT*

Pakistan seeks \$10bn in US forex stabilisation aid to boost economy

Karachi: Pakistan has asked the US for a \$10 billion exchange stabilization facility, according to sources.

The request follows Pakistan's role in brokering talks over the Iran war, which raised its diplomatic profile and stirred hopes that it could seek economic gains from Washington and other partners.

Pakistani Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb made the request in a letter delivered during a meeting with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Tuesday, a US official said.

In it, Islamabad asked for creation of a Bilateral Exchange Stabilization Support Facility between the US and the Pakistani government worth \$10 billion with maturity of up to five years. The facility, if agreed to, would bolster Pakistan's reserves, ease pressure on the Pakistani rupee and reduce its reliance on multilateral financing.

The US Treasury declined to comment on the request.

“Senator Aurangzeb sought greater US support for Pakistan's road to market, underpinned by improved access to international capital markets, higher foreign exchange reserves, and enhanced sovereign credit ratings,” statement said. **REUTERS**

Trump vows to hit a bridge or power plant in Iran for each Hormuz attack

U.S. leader's threat comes during the 11th consecutive night of U.S. strikes on Iran, with attacks targeting aircraft hangars and drone storage sites; Jordan says it intercepted four missiles and four drones, with two missiles falling in 'uninhabited areas'

Associated Press
DUBAI

U.S. President Donald Trump has warned Iran that the U.S. will destroy one bridge or power plant each time Iran shoots at a ship in the Strait of Hormuz.

The warning came after the U.S. carried out another wave of strikes on Iran, where air defences opened fire over the capital, Tehran. Iran launched a missile attack on a Jordanian city on Israel's doorstep, and alerts were issued in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

In his warning on social media, the President returned to earlier threats to

target civilian infrastructure in retaliation for Iranian attacks.

"From this point forward, any time the Islamic Republic of Iran shoots at a ship in the Strait of Hormuz, whether it be by Missile, Rocket, Drone, or any other device or weapon, the United States will bomb and destroy ONE BRIDGE OR POWER PLANT," Mr. Trump wrote on social media.

The U.S. military said the 11th night of air strikes on Iran targeted aircraft hangars and drone storage sites, as diplomatic efforts have shown little public sign of progress. Officials on both sides have dug in



Donald Trump during a dignified transfer solemn event for troops killed in West Asia, at Dover Air Force Base in U.S. on Wednesday. AFP

on their dispute over the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway for global energy that remains largely closed because of Iranian attacks.

Iran has avoided strik-

ing Israel since hostilities resumed last month, apparently hoping to keep it from re-entering the war. But the missile and drone attack on Jordan's city of

Aqaba, within sight of Israel's Eilat, raised concerns over a further widening of the conflict after an agreement to halt hostilities collapsed.

Jordan's military said it intercepted four Iranian missiles over Aqaba, while two others fell in "uninhabited areas". Plumes of smoke could be seen overhead in videos filmed by people in the nearby Israeli city of Eilat. Jordan said it also intercepted four Iranian drones.

Another missile alert sounded in Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia warned residents of Dammam to seek shelter. Authorities later said danger had passed.

Zelenskyy fires Army chief and names a replacement

Associated Press

KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday fired Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and named his replacement, following days of mass protests in Kyiv, the country's capital, and other cities across the nation demanding his removal.

It was the second major change Mr. Zelenskyy has made under street pressure, after protests last summer forced him to undo a law weakening Ukraine's anti-corruption watchdogs.

Mr. Zelenskyy appointed Mykhailo Drapatyi as the new army chief, according to a statement on social media. "Our shared wish is one – victory over



Acting Defence Minister Yevhenii Khmara with commander-in-chief of Ukraine's armed forces Mykhailo Drapatyi on Wednesday. REUTERS

the enemy and conditions at the front and in pressure on Russia that would force Russia toward peace," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

The Ukrainian leader said he made the decision after a series of meetings with military commanders. They began shortly after protests broke out demanding the reinstatement

of former Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, seen by demonstrators as a driver of military modernisation, and the removal of Gen. Syrskyi.

Mr. Zelenskyy thanked Gen. Syrskyi for his achievements in Ukraine's fight against Russia and praised him for the defence of Kyiv.