

SC agrees to hear pleas alleging police excesses at CJP's march

Police personnel continue using excessive force against student protesters, counsel tells court; CRPF says it is verifying media reports on pellet injuries; CJP to launch a website to archive videos and photos documenting 'police brutality'

Aaratrika Bhaumik
Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear on Monday two freshly instituted petitions alleging police excesses during the July 20 crackdown on student protesters in the national capital.

The development came hours after Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant clarified in open court on Friday that "no petition" had previously been filed on the issue. He criticised "reckless" reports suggesting that the court had refused to list such a matter.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which is spearheading the protests, announced on Friday that it would launch a website to archive videos and photo-



Holding firm: CJP supporters protesting at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Friday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

graphs documenting alleged police brutality during the crackdown. It said the material would form the basis of legal proceedings seeking the registration of FIRs against the police personnel allegedly responsible for the violence.

Meanwhile, after *The Hindu* reported that two unarmed protesters were struck by pellets allegedly fired by Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) said on Friday that it was "verifying the media reports". A CRPF official

CJP firm on Education Minister's resignation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A two-member delegation of the Cockroach Janta Party, which met Union Ministers J.P. Nadda and Jitendra Singh on Friday, reiterated their demand for the resignation of

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. They also sought a public apology to the protesting students who were "brutally thrashed" on July 20.

FULL REPORT ON
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said no action has been taken so far.

Earlier, the Delhi Police had denied using pellet guns against the protesters. The RAF, a specialised anti-riot force, had been deployed under the overall control of the Delhi Police during the July 20 opera-

tion. One of the injured protesters, 19-year-old Sahil Lochab, risks losing vision in his right eye after a pellet pierced his pupil.

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'WILL NOT RELENT'
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Internet down, 18 metro stations shut, yet Jantar Mantar remains upbeat

Volunteers deployed at entry, exit gates to prevent overcrowding as thousands continue to turn up at the protest site; CJP warns of nationwide agitation if Pradhan is not removed in two days

Nikhil M Babu
Suruchi Kumari
NEW DELHI

Thousands of people continued to turn up at the Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar on Friday, even as the restrictions around the authorities closed the entry and exit gates at 18 metro stations, two more than were closed the previous day. Internet services remained suspended at Jantar Mantar, Sansad Marg and parts of central Delhi for the third consecutive day.

The protest's momentum appeared undimmed despite the restrictions. Following their meeting with Union Ministers, CJP spokesperson Ashutosh Ranka said they would call for a nationwide stir on the lines of the July 20 'Chalo Sansad' march if the government does not agree to their demand to oust Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan within the next two days.

'Here for my son'

At Sansad Marg, 25-year-old Afroza from Mehrauli was dressed in shades of the tricolour and handing out water bottles. "My son wanted to join, but I told him I would go on his behalf. I didn't know about



Burst of colour: Protesters at Jantar Mantar during a drizzle on Friday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

this protest until July 18, when a relative called me and asked if I had visited the site," she said.

For the past two days, Ms. Afroza, who has never been to school, has been finishing her chores by 11 a.m. and heading to Jantar Mantar. This is what she plans to do on Saturday as well. She had brought along four packs of water bottles to distribute. "When I came here yester-

day, I saw people buying water bottles. No one at such a place should be charged for water. So, my husband and I bought these," she said.

Many volunteers were tasked with maintaining peace and order amid the large turnout, with several deployed at the entry and exit gates to prevent overcrowding at the main protest site. Arun Singh from Uttar Pradesh has been vo-

lunteering at the food counter since he arrived at the protest site on July 19.

Protesters continue to occupy a stretch of Sansad Marg from Connaught Place to Tolstoy Marg while the remaining stretch is held by security forces, with heavy deployment of personnel and riot-control vehicles. CJP volunteers have formed a human chain separating the protesters from the police.

Violence erupts at students' protest march in Kolkata

Several injured as protesters allegedly clash with police after they resorted to firing tear gas shells, baton-charging to clear Esplanade; agitators 'anti-nationals', will drive them out of Bengal, says CM

Shrabana Chatterjee

Senjuti Sengupta

KOLKATA

Violence broke out during a protest march in Kolkata's Esplanade area on Friday that was organised to express solidarity with student protesters at Jantar Mantar in Delhi.

Protesters allegedly clashed with police personnel after they resorted to firing tear gas shells and baton-charging to clear the area. Several people from both sides, along with a few journalists, were injured in the clashes.

The protest, organised by people associated with the Cockroach Janta Party and various Left-affiliated students' associations, began at Sealdah station, where thousands gathered. The protesters staged



Strict action: Police personnel baton-charging protesters who organised a march in Kolkata's Esplanade area on Friday. PTI

a dharna at Dorina Crossing, following which the police resorted to baton charge and fired two tear gas shells to clear the area. In retaliation, protesters allegedly threw shoes and bottles at the police.

"A few people were reportedly injured, but a specific figure of the injured is yet to be disclosed," Kolkata Additional

Police Commissioner Kunal Aggarwal said.

He added that the situation was under control now and that the police were trying to hold talks with the protesters.

Earlier, several participants expressed solidarity with protesters in Delhi and said they had faced "brutal police action for raising their voices". "The

education system is unfair. We are only asking for a fair system that is accessible to every student and will help us build a better future," Udita Goswami, a 23-year-old Zoology student who took part in the rally, told *The Hindu*.

Political reactions

Reacting to the protest in Kolkata, West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenudhikari termed the protesters "anti-national" and said such activities would not be allowed in the State. "In just 10 weeks, we will drive these anti-nationals out of Bengal," he told reporters.

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee praised the protesters for their "indomitable spirit, unwavering courage, and refusal to bow before intimidation or the abuse of State power".

'Can EC do whatever it wants?': HC on deputing teachers for SIR in Delhi

Court questions EC's assertion that teachers are compensated for election duties; schedules next hearing in PIL against 'large-scale' deployment of govt. school staff for SIR drive in Delhi for July 28

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the Election Commission's (EC) response to a public interest litigation (PIL) plea challenging the "large-scale" deployment of government school teachers as Booth-Level Officers (BLOs) and enumeration staff for the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the national capital.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia directed the EC to file a short affidavit after hearing the PIL plea filed by advocates Rajesh Kumar Gogna and Ashok Agarwal. The plea questioned whether government school teachers could be mandatorily assigned election duties.

On July 22, Suman Lata, 51, a teacher at a Municipal Corporation of Delhi primary school and assigned BLO duties, died of a heart attack, her family said. Her husband, Sanjeev Kumar Yadav, said Lata had been



BLOs verifying the details of residents during a door-to-door drive as part of the ongoing SIR drive in the national capital. FILE PHOTO

under considerable stress over the past few days while balancing her responsibilities as a teacher and duties as a BLO.

The EC's counsel submitted that the SIR is a nationwide exercise and teachers are required to perform poll-related work only during non-teaching hours or on holidays. He said teachers receive honorarium and compensation for the work, adding that only 10-14% of teachers are ultimately deployed.

"If a request is made for nine teachers, the school

deploys only three to four. I don't have a problem with four teachers showing up," the EC's counsel said, describing the poll panel's approach as "liberal".

'What if they need rest?'

The Bench observed that if the EC states that participation by teachers is voluntary rather than mandatory, the court could dispose of the matter. "Can they be said to be mandatory? Somebody is not interested in your honorarium or compensation. They need rest. It should be voluntary. Tak-

ing shade of Article 324, you can do whatever you want?" the court orally remarked. "If you are calling them volunteers, make that statement. We will dispose of it," it added.

Article 324 grants EC the power of "superintendence, direction and control" over polls in India.

'Students affected'

The plea contended that the mass deployment of government, municipal and government-aided school teachers for the SIR is adversely affecting the education of lakhs of students in Delhi. It alleged that in several schools, regular teaching staff had been withdrawn during school hours, forcing classes to be handled by guest teachers or teachers from unrelated subjects.

The plea sought a direction to the authorities to "rationalise" the deployment of school teachers by capping it at 10% and scheduling their duties outside teaching hours.

The High Court listed the next hearing in the plea for July 28.

SC proposes special courts for Manipur violence cases

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday proposed the establishment of special courts to conduct day-to-day trials in cases arising out of the 2023 Manipur violence and directed the investigating agencies to expedite the pending probes to ensure that there is no further "inordinate delay".

A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana was hearing a batch of petitions relating to the ethnic violence in the State.

Referring to status reports filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Special Investigation Team (SIT), the Bench noted that the prevailing law and order situation had made the examination of witnesses difficult, with many having been displaced or relocated.

The court also pointed out that the prolonged suspension of Internet services had impeded the collection of digital evidence, while restrictions on the movement of investigating officers had hampered field investigations, contributing to delays in the probe.

"We tentatively propose

The apex court said the prevailing law and order situation in the State made the examination of witnesses difficult

to constitute special courts, with the concurrence of the State of Manipur and the High Courts of Manipur and Gauhati, for trials to be taken up on a day-to-day basis, especially in light of the inordinate delay that has already taken place in the ongoing investigation," the Bench said.

To facilitate the establishment of the proposed special courts, the Bench directed Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the State government, the SIT and the CBI, to collate details of cases in which investigations have been completed and chargesheets filed, as well as those in which the probe is still under way.

"This information is eminently required for the purpose of determining the strength of the special courts which we propose to establish," the Bench said.

'EXPEDITE PROBE'

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+ U.S. announces permanent tariffs; India remains at 10%

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

WASHINGTON

Even as the U.S.'s temporary 10% tariffs come to an end, it has announced permanent tariffs related to its investigation into forced labour on 60 of its trading partners, including India. India's tariff rate, however, remains at 10% instead of the proposed 12.5% after it banned the import of forced labour goods earlier this month.

The U.S. had in February imposed a temporary 150-day 10% tariff on all of its trade partners, which expired on Friday. In March, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative had also launched two separate investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act, 1974.

The new tariffs announced late Thursday night (India time) are a result of the findings of one of these investigations – the one on whether the U.S.'s trade partners were doing enough to prevent the import of goods made using forced labour.

The second investigation, into whether other economies were using excess manufacturing capacity to export to the U.S. in a manner that was hurting the U.S. economy, is still pending and could result in further tariffs.

“President Donald Trump recognises that decades of moral suasion have not eradicated forced labour from global supply chains,” U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement. “The U.S. has had a forced labour import ban for nearly a century, and rigorously enforces it; it’s well past time for our trading partners to do the same.”



Donald Trump

“Today’s action will begin to correct what is both a human rights abuse and a distortive trade practice to improve the welfare of workers everywhere,” he added.

The draft report of investigation, released in June, had proposed a 12.5% tariff on 54 countries, including India, as they had “failed to impose and effectively enforce” prohibitions on the import of goods produced using forced labour. However, earlier this month, the Indian government released a notification banning the import of goods made using forced labour.

“I am encouraged by the trading partners who have moved quickly to adopt forced labour import prohibitions, and look forward to ensuring their effective enforcement,” Mr. Greer said in his statement.

As a result of India’s actions, it has now been included among the countries that will face a 10% tariff instead of 12.5%. These 10% tariffs will apply to countries that impose a forced labour import prohibition, have committed to impose and enforce such a prohibition through a trade agreement with the U.S., or have imposed a partial regime with the effect of preventing the import of certain forced labour goods.

10% U.S. tariff elicits mixed reaction from Indian exporters

While some exporters say the levy will make Indian goods expensive, others opine India will not lose edge as goods are competitively taxed

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

For the Indian exporters to the U.S., the 10% tariff is likely to have a mixed impact, varying for each sector.

While some exporters are of the view this will make Indian goods expensive, others say that Indian goods are still competitively taxed and so, India will not lose its edge.

“The fact that India has been placed in the lower 10% tariff category, while several competing exporting nations, including China, Vietnam, Thailand, Türkiye, UAE, Brazil, South Africa and others, face a higher tariff of 12.5%, reflects the recognition by the U.S. of the policy measures taken by the Government of India to strengthen its framework relating to forced labour,” S.C. Ralhan, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations said.

“This has helped India secure a relatively favourable position compared with many of its global competitors,” he added.

Rajesh Rokde, chairman of the All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council is not as optimistic.

“The U.S. government’s decision... will undoubtedly create challenges for our gem and jewellery exporters, making Indian products less price competitive in one of our largest markets,” Mr. Rokde said.

Margin pressure

“While the rate is lower than that imposed on some other countries, this measure still places significant pressure on margins and could dent the growth trajectory of our industry,” added the chairman of the



Trade wars: The Trump administration slapped levies on goods from 60 trading partners on the issue of forced labour. AFP

All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council

Reputational risks

The Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) said, “The tariff imposition on the issue of forced labour is deeply unfortunate as it does not indicate an expiry date and causes reputational risks. The CITI looks forward to the Indian government taking up this issue with the U.S. given the detrimental impact it can have on textile and apparel exports from India,” said chairman Ashwin Chandran.

“What can raise a serious challenge for Indian textile and apparel exporters is the fact that although many key competitors of ours have also been subject to the same tariff rate, a window has been opened for textile and apparel exports from these countries to enter the U.S. free of the Section 301 tariffs. This differential treatment risks diverting sourcing orders for textile and apparel items away from India,” he said.

The U.S. continues to be the single-largest market for India’s textile and apparel items. Annual export of textile and apparel pro-

ducts from India to the U.S. are usually close to \$11 billion. The industry maintains a zero-tolerance approach, backed by active enforcement measures and compliance mechanisms. On July 13, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) issued a notification inserting new paragraphs into the Foreign Trade Policy regarding the prohibition on import of goods produced using forced labour.

India has also implemented four Labour Codes to protect workers’ rights, he added.

An executive from an automotive components manufacturers body said, on condition of anonymity, that while any additional tariff is a concern, the 10% levy is lower than what the industry had anticipated. With competing countries such as China, the EU and others also facing U.S. tariffs, Indian auto component exporters can emerge relatively more competitive in the U.S. market.

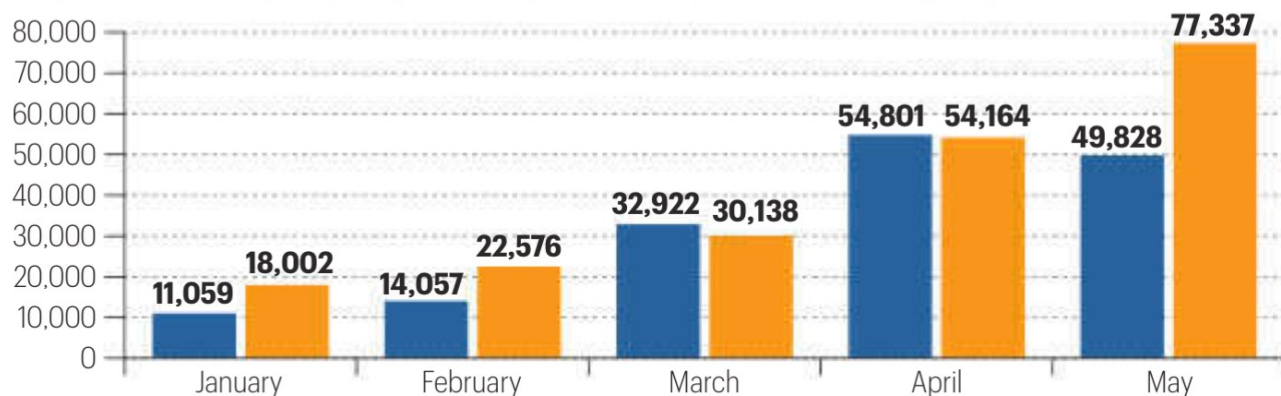
The Trump administration had slapped 10% and 12.5% levies on goods from 60 trading partners, alleging inadequate enforcement of forced-labour import prohibitions.

AS RUSSIAN OIL PURCHASES SURGED

India paid \$15 bn of imports in rupees in March-May

• RUSSIAN OIL PURCHASES & PAYMENT FOR IMPORTS IN RUPEES

● Imports settled in rupees (Rs cr) ● Crude petroleum imported from Russia (Rs cr)



NOTE: DATA ON SETTLEMENT OF IMPORTS IN RUPEES IS FOR ALL MERCHANDISE GOODS, SOURCE: RBI, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

EVEN AS the value of the rupee tumbled to multiple all-time lows following the onset of the war in West Asia, India used its domestic currency to pay for nearly \$15 billion worth of imports in March, April, and May.

The payment in rupees may have been for oil bought from Russia, whose share in India's oil imports surged after the US and Israel's attack on Iran in late February led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

According to data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) this week, imports worth Rs 1.38 lakh crore were paid for in rupees during the three months in question, calculations by *The Indian Express* showed. This accounted for 7.1% of India's merchandise imports in the three months and is approximately equivalent to \$14.6 billion at the average exchange rate of 94-per-dollar that prevailed during March-May. In the previous three months — December 2025 to February 2026 — imports worth Rs 42,506 crore were settled in rupees, equal to 2.4% of total inbound shipments.

"The rupee's depreciation will only explain a small part of this increased rupee settlement of imports," said Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist at Bank of Baroda, instead pointing to the sharp rise in India's purchases of Russian oil starting March.

The imports paid for in ru-

pees during March-May is far more than before and exceeds the total for 2023-24 (Rs 99,680 crore) and 2024-25 (Rs 1.13 lakh crore). In 2025-26, the rupee was used to pay for imports worth Rs 1.72 lakh crore.

Supplies from Russia

First announced on March 12, the US' sanctions waiver on buying sanctioned Russian crude oil led to a big jump in purchases by India in the face of soaring global energy prices, with around 40% of India's oil needs met through flows from the Strait of Hormuz.

After the US' first waiver expired on April 11, another was issued on April 17. Once that expired on May 16, a final waiver was announced on May 17, which ended on June 17. There has been no renewal since then.

With the waivers in place, India stepped up its purchases of Russian crude oil to record levels. According to commerce ministry data, India imported Russian crude petroleum to the tune of \$17.13 billion in March-May, up 30% year-on-year.

In February, India's Russian oil imports amounted to \$2.49 billion.

Settling trade in rupees

To be sure, this would not be the first time that India has paid for Russian oil in rupees, with the RBI in mid-2022 announcing a framework for the settlement of international trade in rupees. As a net buyer of goods and services from abroad,

India's import bill is often at the mercy of the rupee's performance — if it weakens, it would lead to more money being paid by importers for a fixed dollar amount.

In 2025-26, India had a trade deficit of \$119 billion. As such, paying for imports in rupees can reduce the outflow of foreign currency and ease the pressure on the exchange rate which has been under pressure over the last year due to foreign capital outflows from domestic financial markets and global geopolitical developments.

Rupees are also being used by other countries to pay for Indian goods and software exports. **From Rs 15,195 crore in February, Indian exports that were paid for in rupees more than doubled to Rs 41,373 crore in March, before declining to Rs 10,218 crore in April and Rs 8,289 crore in May. The jump in March may have again been on account of Russia.**

"With India paying for Russian oil in rupees, it makes sense for Russia to use those rupees to pay for what products it can from India," an economist said, requesting not to be named.

Except for March 2026, payment received in rupees by India for its exports constitutes a small portion of total exports: Rs 1.75 lakh crore in 2023-24 (3.56% of total exports), Rs 1.69 lakh crore in 2024-25 (3.21%), and Rs 1.87 lakh crore in 2025-26 (3.22%). In the first two months of 2026-27, it has been a mere Rs 18,507 crore (1.82%).

U.S. hits Iran from south to north after Trump threats over Red Sea

President says he is considering re-launching major combat operations in Iran and is close to a decision; Tehran fired at American bases in Arab countries and warned people there that they may strike buildings used by U.S. security personnel

Reuters
DUBAI

U.S. missiles struck targets across Iran, reaching as far as its Caspian coast, on Friday after President Donald Trump vowed "major military punishment" for Tehran and its Houthi allies in Yemen for extending the war to a second major shipping chokepoint, the mouth of the Red Sea. Two weeks after the collapse of an interim truce meant to end the war, the Iranian armed forces responded by firing at U.S. bases in neighbouring Arab countries and warning people there that they may strike non-military buildings



Smoke rises from an explosion at an unknown location, during what the Centcom says are strikes on Iranian military targets. REUTERS

used by U.S. personnel. The Iranian army said Mr. Trump's threats only strengthened its resolve.

The Houthis, who control northern and western Yemen, said this week they

were imposing a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia, which has diverted millions of barrels of oil each day by pipeline to the Red Sea to skirt Iran's near-total blockade in the Strait of

Hormuz. Mr. Trump wrote on social media he would hold Iran accountable for any further attacks by the fighters, "and major military punishment will be inflicted upon Iran and, of course, the Houthis, themselves".

He told Axios he was considering re-launching major combat operations in Iran and was close to a decision. "They haven't received enough pain yet," the U.S. news outlet quoted Mr. Trump as saying. Trump also said on social media that any damage to cargo ships would be paid for with Iranian money, referring to frozen Iranian assets held by the U.S., but without specifying how.

Iranian state media said missiles had struck Qeshm Island on the Strait of Hormuz. U.S. airstrikes hit Piranshahr, in West Azerbaijan Province near Iran's border with Iraq, damaging several vehicles, according to the province's emergency services.

The Iranian army said it had attacked U.S. military equipment depots at Al-Adiri, latterly named Camp Buehring, in northern Kuwait, and the positions of U.S. troops at Camp Arifjan and at Camp Doha, near Kuwait City. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had significantly damaged a surveillance tower used by the U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain.

U.S. MISSILES HIT QESHM ISLAND AND SITES IN GILAN ON IRAN'S CASPIAN COAST

Drones target US bases in Iraq as tensions escalate

Tehran says it also attacked US bases in Kuwait, Bahrain & Jordan

Associated Press
Irbil, July 24

DRONES CARRYING explosives targeted a city in northern Iraq where US forces are stationed, and sirens rang out in Bahrain on Friday, hours after the American military said it finished its 13th night of strikes against Iran.

The conflict has flared again over the past week, as the US pounded Iran while Tehran attacked ships in the Strait of Hormuz and targeted US assets and allies in the region.

The strait, which is a crucial passage for the world's energy supplies, is at the centre of the latest fighting since Iranian attacks can effectively shut the waterway, sending fuel prices soaring worldwide and causing widespread economic turmoil.

The Iranian-allied Houthis added further pressure this week by targeting two Saudi tankers in the Red Sea, making good on a threat to cut off an alternative route for the region's oil.

Despite the war's unpopularity - and its widespread damage to Iran and the global economy - the latest round of fighting has no clear off-ramp. The Iranian Health Ministry



Iran Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf with Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi in Tehran, on Thursday. REUTERS

says 3,434 people have been killed since the war began.

The US and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28 and have offered shifting goals for the war, including toppling Tehran's government and eliminating its nuclear programme. But the conflict has devolved into a fight for control of the strait - with Iran apparently hoping to win concessions by inflicting damage on the global economy.

US-led forces shot down five explosive-laden drones Friday over Irbil, according to security officials in northern Iraq. No injuries or damage were reported.

Flights continued as normal at the airport, the state-run Iraqi News Agency reported, citing the facility's director. US military officials in Iraq did not respond to a request for comment.

A small contingent of US

military advisers is based in Iraq, many of them in Irbil. Iran's Revolutionary Guard urged people in neighbouring countries to stay away from bases with American troops.

The Guard said it had targeted the US base in Udairi, Kuwait, setting ablaze three ammunition and storage sheds and destroying them. It also claimed to have struck a watchtower for the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, based in Bahrain, which it said was damaged.

US Central Command did not respond to inquiries about the claims. Bahrain said it intercepted and shot down Iranian aerial attacks on Friday.

Jordan's armed forces said they had downed seven Iranian missiles and six drones Friday.

US strikes hit a Revolutionary Guard naval base in north-

Trump warns China, Russia not to join war

Washington: US President Donald Trump said Friday he does not believe China or Russia are "participating" in the ongoing Iran conflict, but warned that if they did get involved "it would be very bad for them."

"President Xi, at our recent meeting in Beijing, China, told me that he would not, under any circumstances, give or sell Weapons to the Islamic Republic of Iran — And that statement included Chinese Companies," he wrote on Truth Social.

Trump said Putin had also told him that he would not sell weapons to Iran and that he believed Russia and China were not participating in the Iran conflict. "If they did, it would be very bad for them — Certainly not in their best interests," Trump posted. **REUTERS**

ern Iran, the semiofficial news outlets *Fars* and *ISNA* reported.

Blasts from US bombardment overnight were also reported on Iran's Qeshm Island, a base for naval assets including drone boats that Iran can use to attack vessels in Strait of Hormuz, as well as in Isfahan province, home to a major Iranian air base and Iran's nuclear sites.

Bangladesh President Shahabuddin resigns, Speaker Ahmed to serve as Acting President

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

The President of Bangladesh, Mohammed Shahabuddin, resigned from his post on Friday, two years ahead of the end of his tenure. In a letter addressed to Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, Speaker of the National Assembly (Jatiyo Sansad), Mr. Shahabuddin said he was suffering from serious health issues and was unable to perform the duties of the office of President.

Speaker Ahmed will serve as Acting President for 90 days in accordance

with the Constitution, and a new President must be elected within that timeframe.

Mr. Shahabuddin was sworn in as the 22nd President of Bangladesh on April 24, 2023, during the third term of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Bangladesh went through a controversial election in January 2024, when Ms. Hasina was re-elected, which was followed by the uprising against her government in July-August 2024. In his letter, Mr. Shahabuddin defended his decisions that led to the for-



Mohammed Shahabuddin

mation of the interim government after the fall of Prime Minister Hasina's government on August 5, 2024.

In the letter, he said that he is suffering from heart

disease, hypertension, diabetes, and kidney complications.

Mr. Ahmed, who cut short his visit to Bangkok where he was undergoing medical treatment and returned to Dhaka on Friday, said he accepted the President's resignation.

"After accepting the resignation, I have assumed the responsibilities of the President in accordance with Article 54 of the Constitution," Mr. Ahmed, 80, said at a press conference held at his parliament office.

(With inputs from PTI)

Trump's Saudi nuclear gambit marks a shift

WASHINGTON'S DECISION to sign a civil nuclear cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia marks an important shift in Middle East geopolitics — and highlights the growing role of advanced technologies in the regional power balance. The agreement will face close scrutiny in the US Congress, along with opposition from Israel's supporters and the non-proliferation community. The deal will help Riyadh build a civilian nuclear energy programme and reduce its dependence on hydrocarbons. Washington wants American companies to build Saudi reactors and secure a long-term position in its nuclear infrastructure.

The main controversy is the possibility of a uranium enrichment facility in Saudi Arabia at a time when Washington seeks to roll back Iran's nuclear capabilities. Yet that contradiction also points to the strategic rationale behind the agreement — the need to address Saudi concerns about the regional nuclear balance. The growth of Iranian power relative to its Arab neighbours has already encouraged the UAE to establish a civilian nuclear programme. A Saudi enrichment facility would be built by American companies and operate under US supervision. Such arrangements could reduce proliferation risks while giving Riyadh a measure of strategic parity with Tehran. Washington is also linking the nuclear deal to Saudi recognition of Israel. Riyadh has so far resisted joining the Abraham Accords. The nuclear agreement could therefore become part of a wider triangular negotiation among Washington, Riyadh and Tel Aviv over regional security, Palestinian statehood and the future of Arab-Israeli relations.

India is largely absent from the emerging nuclear industrial competition in the Middle East. This reflects decades of resistance in Delhi and Mumbai to reforming the atomic energy sector. The US-Saudi agreement should accelerate the implementation of the SHANTI Act and help prepare Indian industry to participate in the export of nuclear technologies across the Middle East. Politically, Delhi should support the US-Saudi agreement, underwritten by ironclad non-proliferation safeguards, and offer assistance to Riyadh's civilian nuclear programme.