

Air Force is not against theaterisation: IAF Chief

New Delhi: The Indian Air Force is not against theaterisation and it is insisting on having an objective approach for any new initiative that should ensure minimal disruption to the existing structures, Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal A P Singh said on Saturday.

In an address at an event in Kanpur, the Air Chief Marshal called for not "shaking up" the existing system and batted for looking internally to enhance India's military prowess rather than copying anything from

another country.

The government had announced the theaterisation plan in 2019 to ensure greater synergy among the three services. However, no visible forward movement has been made towards it.

"I can assure my own people here that the IAF is not against theaterisation the way the media puts it," he said. "What the Air Force has been insisting is that let us look at it objectively. Let us look at what are the things that are not correct. We need to correct that," he said.

PTI

Govt. promises permanent solution to Gorkha issue, sets up committee

Gorkhas have been seeking a separate State of Gorkhaland comprising parts of Darjeeling hills and adjoining areas; Shah assures the community of a political solution under the ambit of Constitution; he also promises adequate Central funding

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Union government on Saturday decided to set up a committee to draft an agreement and finalise modalities for a “permanent political solution” to the demands of the Gorkha community in the Darjeeling hills and adjoining areas of north Bengal.

The community has been demanding the creation of a separate State of Gorkhaland, to be carved out of territories in the Darjeeling hills and adjoining areas.

Saturday’s announcement came at a meeting in Siliguri chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and attended by West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, Darjeeling BJP MP Raju Bista, and other leaders from different political parties of the region. **“It was decided to consti-**



Home Minister Amit Shah, West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari and other dignitaries at a meeting in Siliguri on Saturday. PTI

tute a committee, chaired by the former deputy National Security Adviser and current interlocutor Shri Pankaj Kumar Singh, to finalise the modalities,” a statement from the Union Home Ministry said.

Statehood demand

The demand for a Gorkhaland State has been alive since the 1980s. The earlier arrangements of regional

autonomous bodies such as the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 1988 and the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2011 had failed to live up to the aspirations and expectations of the people.

According to the Home Ministry, during the meeting on Saturday, all issues concerning the hill population of West Bengal were discussed in detail, and

“demands regarding their identity, a permanent political solution, and recognition under the Constitution were taken up”.

The statement added that Mr. Shah promised a permanent political solution soon under the umbrella of the Constitution and promised to sympathetically look into all other demands of the Gorkha community. He also said that adequate funding from the Centre will take care of all pending issues.

In October 2025, the Centre appointed former Deputy National Security Adviser Pankaj Kumar Singh as the interlocutor to hold talks with Gorkha representatives to address their political demands.

The issue has dominated the politics of Darjeeling hills over the past several decades. The region has been voting for the BJP over the past two decades, and the party has been

promising a permanent political solution.

Speaking to presspersons after the meeting, Mr. Bista said representatives of all political parties were present at the meeting. Harshavardhan Sringhla, former IFS officer and Rajya Sabha MP, said the meeting had set the ball rolling for a solution to the Gorkhaland issue.

Gorkha Janmukti Morcha leader Roshan Giri said the meeting aimed at resolving the Gorkhaland issue under the ambit of the Constitution. Among those present at the meeting were GJM chief Bimal Gurung and Gorkha National Liberation Front chief Mann Ghisingh.

While the parties in the Darjeeling hills are in support of statehood for Gorkhaland, the development will have repercussions in south Bengal as the people there do not want any division of the State.

India and Mauritius sign five-year fuel supply pact

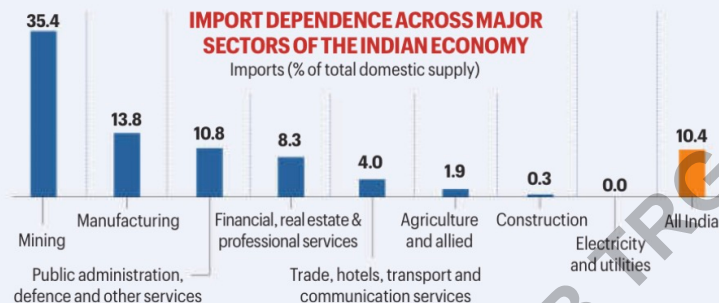
New Delhi: India and Mauritius have deepened their energy partnership with a five-year agreement under which Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) will supply the island nation's entire import requirement of petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel, strengthening New Delhi's role as a key energy-security partner in the Indian Ocean.

The agreement was exchanged during Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri's official visit to Mauritius on August 20-21, alongside a government-to-government memorandum of understanding (MoU) to expand cooperation in oil and gas, including petroleum product supplies, training and capacity building, and biofuels. The

long-term sales and purchase agreement between IOC and Mauritius' State Trading Corporation is designed to provide Mauritius with assured supplies and reduce its exposure to price volatility, an official statement said. This, it said, was the first long-term supply agreement by an Indian public-sector oil marketing company outside South Asia in recent years. Under the pact, "IOC will supply the entire import requirement of Mauritius of motor spirit (petrol), high speed diesel (diesel) and aviation turbine fuel (ATF)." Separately, IOC said the 27,500 tonne bunker fuel storage facility at MAP Land in Mer Rouge, Mauritius has been built at an investment of \$25 million. PTI

•RANKING INDIA'S IMPORT VULNERABILITIES

The ongoing war in West Asia has disrupted critical trade routes, hitting the global supply chains for essential commodities and goods. It has shown that high import dependence can translate into economic vulnerability. According to a recent Crisil report, the conflict not only triggered a spike in commodity prices but also constrained the availability of products essential to major economic activities.



NOTE: DATA IS AT CURRENT PRICES OF 2023-24. SOURCE: NATIONAL STATISTICS OFFICE'S SUPPLY USE TABLES 2023-24

DISSECTING IMPORT DEPENDENCE ACROSS PRODUCTS

Imports (% of total supply)

IMPORTS (% OF TOTAL SUPPLY)		KEY PRODUCTS
Above 80%		Crude oil
60-80%		Natural gas, copper, aircraft, ships
40-60%		Gems and jewellery, coal and lignite, Industrial machinery, medical instruments, TV/ radio broadcasting services
20-40%		Electrical inputs, chemical products, plastics, Machine tools, R&D services, business services, air transport
Below 20%		Food products, clothing, footwear, automobiles, electricity, refined petroleum products, construction inputs, electrical machinery, tractors, trade, hotels, restaurants, IT, financial, education and health services

Around 8.7 crore youth not studying, working or undergoing training: NITI

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, August 22

AN ESTIMATED 8.7 crore Indian youth aged 15 to 29 are not studying, working, or receiving training, a recent NITI Aayog report said, highlighting the urgent need for subsidised training programmes to encourage self-employment and align with local demand and emerging sectors.

The Aayog, in the report titled 'Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047', said the estimate is based on data from the 78th round of the National Sample Survey conducted in 2021.

To ensure the highest impact, the Aayog organised India's workforce landscape and learners into five segments — schooling; tertiary education; formal and informal work; not in education, employment and training (NEET) youth; and women. "NEET youth are constrained by the absence of income and the sunk cost of prior education. Students often cannot layer paid skilling onto existing financial commitments," it

said. The Aayog has defined NEET youth as youth comprising individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 who are not engaged in education, employment, or training, as well as those who are unemployed.

"NEET youth and women require affordable or subsidised training options, alongside dedicated financial support where constraints are most binding. Across segments, the ability to combine learning with earning remains a central requirement. For the workforce and NEET youth, the need shifts towards mid-career reskilling, self-employment pathways, and learning options aligned with local demand and emerging sectors," the Aayog said in the report.

The report pointed out that students, especially those from low-income households, are already stretched by college expenses and, in many cases, private tuition.

As a result, it said making additional investment in paid skilling alongside a traditional degree is often financially unviable.

China, Indonesia agree to boost defence ties; work closer on minerals and energy

Reuters

Jakarta, August 22

China and Indonesia agreed on Friday to boost military ties and work closely on minerals, energy and technology, as Jakarta seeks to balance ties with both Beijing and Washington amid economic and geopolitical tensions, including in South China Sea.

Both countries should “seize the moment,” China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in remarks made at the start of his visit to Jakarta. He was travelling with Defence Minister Dong Jun to meet their Indonesian counterparts.

“The current international situation is intertwined and complex. Unilateralism and hegemonic acts bring serious impact on global cooperation and stability,” he said. “China actively aims to build China-Indonesia cooperation at a high level,” Wang added.

The two countries pledged to cooperate across multiple areas



China and Indonesia's foreign and defence ministers pose during a 2+2 meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia on Friday. FILE

from artificial intelligence, defence and rail transport to green energy, satellites and fisheries.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto has advocated maintaining Indonesia's “free and active” foreign policy of non-alignment, vowing to befriend all countries including China and the United States, an important trade partner with which Jakarta's defence ties are expanding.

Wang said both sides agreed to support each other's core interests and will cooperate more in energy and mineral resources.

Resource-rich Indonesia, a \$1.4 trillion G20 economy, has vast deposits of nickel, tin, copper, gold and bauxite and is the world's largest exporter of palm oil and of thermal coal, with China among its top buyers.

Congo gets over 16,000 doses of Ebola vaccine amid record outbreak

Associated Press

Bunia, August 22

CONGO HAS received more than 16,000 doses of the Ervebo vaccine as the country grapples with the fastest Ebola outbreak in history, the country's health minister said.

The 16,250 doses arrived at the N'djili International Airport in the capital, Kinshasa, late Friday, as part of 70,000 doses expected from the World Health Organization and partners that were announced on Thursday. More doses are expected early next week.

The current Ebola outbreak in Congo is caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus, which currently has no approved treatment or vaccine.

It can spread easily and go undetected because some of its symptoms are similar to other illnesses, such as malaria.

The Ervebo vaccine is licensed to treat Ebola and has been effective in past outbreaks. The WHO said it may provide some protection



Health workers during a Ebola awareness campaign in Beni, eastern Congo, on Saturday. AP

against the Bundibugyo virus.

The latest outbreak, which has recorded 2,557 deaths out of the 5,375 confirmed cases across six affected provinces, is spreading at an unprecedented rate and is on track to surpass the deadliest outbreak on record, which killed over 11,000 people across West Africa between 2014 and 2016. Data from the Africa Centre for Disease Control shows that transmission has not yet peaked and could reach three times its known rate.

Iran allows Iraqi oil tankers to pass Hormuz

Reuters

August 22

IRAN HAS granted permission for a number of Iraqi oil tankers to pass through the Strait of Hormuz following repeated requests from Baghdad through various channels, Iran's state news agency IRNA reported on Saturday.

IRNA said obtaining special permission for Iraqi tankers was one of Baghdad's main requests during Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf's visit to Iraq.

Iraqi President Nizar Amedi said on Saturday that Iran had facilitated the passage of vessels carrying Iraqi oil



Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi with Iran parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf in Baghdad. FILE

through the Strait in recent days and Baghdad had discussed the export of Iraqi oil through Hormuz with Iranian officials.

The issue remained complicated, he added, speaking at the Baghdad Dialogue policy conference.

Iraq has been among the countries most affected by Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Traffic in the strait remains significantly below pre-war levels and ships continue to face attacks in the area.

Iraq produced around 4 million barrels of oil per day before the outbreak of the Iran war.

Baghdad is working to expand its exports through Turkey's Cevhan port and also to begin exporting oil through Syria's Banivas port and Jordan's Aqaba port. Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi said on Friday.

Move detained pilots to hospital: Tehran to Qatar

Tehran: An Iranian military official on Saturday urged Qatar to transfer detained Iranian pilots to a hospital on land, saying they were being held at sea in "poor physical condition", *Tasnim* news agency reported.

Mohammad Baqerzadeh said the site was unsuitable and called on the International Committee of the Red Cross to send an air ambulance to expedite their return to Iran. **REUTERS**

U.S. imposes 50% import tariffs on \$20 bn worth of Canadian products

Prime Minister Mark Carney says Canada would match the U.S. tariffs 'dollar for dollar' to protect workers and businesses; while the U.S. side says Canada 'declined to finalise the trade deal', the latter blames 'last-minute changes' in the U.S. proposal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

The United States imposed 50% tariffs on \$20 billion worth of Canadian products early Saturday, and Canada immediately said it would retaliate after last-ditch negotiations failed to resolve the latest strain in relations between the historic allies.

President Donald Trump's import taxes will hit about 5% of what Canada ships to the United States every year, including products ranging from hockey sticks to tongue depressors.

"Canada will match those tariffs dollar for dol-



Dominic LeBlanc, Canada's Minister in charge of U.S.-Canada trade, arrives at the Office of the USTR in Washington DC on Friday. AFP

lar to protect our workers and businesses," Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a statement. The retaliation escalates the trade conflict and calls into question the future of a North

American trade agreement covering the United States, Canada and Mexico that is crucial to industry in all three countries.

Canada had sought concessions on tariffs on steel,

aluminium, autos and lumber.

"Tonight, Canada declined to finalise the trade deal under the terms agreed earlier this week.

Despite the U.S. offer to Canada to receive the best treatment of any major exporter to our market, new demands and walk-backs of other commitments by Canada have upended the careful balance reached in the past days," U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement.

Mr. Carney blamed the Republican administration for the breakdown, saying "last-minute changes in the U.S. proposed terms were unfair, uneconomic, and called into question the re-

liability of any deal". He said he had suspended negotiations and directed Canada's negotiating team to return to Ottawa.

Mr. Carney said his government would announce additional support for Canadian workers and businesses in the coming days.

Mr. Greer said the U.S. offer was "forward-looking" and included "a historic economic and national security partnership".

No further talks are planned.

The breakdown in negotiations marked a sharp reversal from two days earlier, when officials from the two countries sounded as if they were headed toward a compromise.