

India, Canada set to take ties to 'higher level': Jaishankar

Press Trust of India

UNITED NATIONS

India and Canada are preparing to take their relationship "to a higher level", External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said after holding a "productive discussion" with his Canadian counterpart, Anita Anand, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session.

"Always a pleasure to meet FM @AnitaAnandMP of Canada #UNGA81. A productive discussion as we prepare to take the relationship to a higher level," Mr. Jaishankar said on Saturday in a post on X.

Earlier this week, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said at the UN that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Canada around December this year, noting that Ottawa is making "good progress" in its trade negotiations with India.

"We are making good progress in our trade negotiations with India. It is an exceptionally important relationship on many many levels, people-to-people levels, security levels, and also trade and economic [levels]," Mr. Carney said at a press conference on September 22 on the sidelines of the UNGA.

India and Canada had committed at the G-20 last



S. Jaishankar with Anita Anand in New York. PTI

year to "look to conclude negotiations by the G20 this year", said Mr. Carney while responding to questions on when Mr. Modi would visit Canada and how close Ottawa was to concluding a free-trade agreement with India, aimed at more than doubling bilateral trade to 70 billion Canadian dollars annually by 2030.

Amid discussions in India regarding diversification of its energy sources, Mr. Jaishankar also met Venezuela Foreign Minister Felix Plasencia Gonzalez on the UNGA sidelines. After the meeting, he said: "Our energy ties are gaining momentum, besides other areas of bilateral cooperation. We also discussed current regional issues."

He also met Belarus Foreign Minister Maxim Ryzhenkov and his Mexican counterpart, Roberto Velasco Alvarez of Mexico.

Russia backs India's bid for permanent UNSC seat

Press Trust of India

UNITED NATIONS

Russia has backed India's candidature for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), saying that any reform of the UN body cannot involve additional seats being allocated to Western countries, especially Germany and Japan.

"Our principled approach is the following: UN Security Council reform cannot involve any additional seats being allocated to Western countries, especially to Germany and Japan, who are now on the path to militarism and revanchism," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in his address to the UN General Assembly.

Alliance support

"We are in favour of broadening the representation of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We support Brazil's and India's candidatures for a permanent seat, and at the same time, I wish to emphasise this: we must satisfy the interests of the African continent," he said. Mr. Lavrov added that through its foreign policy, "Russia is trying to fix the situation in the world, working together with its allies and strategic partners: the BRICS, the SCO, and the Eurasian Economic Union".

EC steps won't undo 'mass disenfranchisement': Cong.

Poll panel's proposed measures amount to an admission that the SIR exercise has been a 'disaster', says Congress leader; targeted removal of marginalised voters meant to benefit the BJP, he adds

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A day after the Election Commission announced multiple steps to address concerns about the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the Congress on Sunday termed them a "desperate attempt at damage control" that "hides all and reveals nothing".

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said the proposed measures amounted to an admission that the exercise had been a "disaster", warning that the "piecemeal" steps would do little to mitigate what he called "mass disenfranchisement".

He questioned several of the assurances given by



Congress workers take out a demonstration in Kolkata on Saturday demanding the suspension of the SIR. AP

the EC, including its proposal to review the ECINet software and plan for booth-level officers to visit the electors who received notices. "We know that in practice these visits were sparse and sporadic. What is the value of promising a second round of visits which likely will not hap-

pen? The logic of repeating a process done poorly once must be examined," he said.

Questioning the rationale of the entire SIR process, which he described as a "colossal waste" of resources, Mr. Ramesh said that nearly 14 crore voters whose names were deleted

Over 2,000 citizens write to CJI against EC

NEW DELHI

Over 2,000 citizens across the country have signed an open letter to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, urging him to initiate *suo motu* proceedings against the conduct of the Election Commission regarding the SIR and the deployment of the ECINet software. » **PAGE 11**

from the rolls were now being asked to apply afresh for inclusion. The targeted removal of marginalised voters was meant to benefit the BJP, he said.

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AHEAD OF PM'S LIKELY VISIT IN DEC

Trade in focus, India, Canada push to up ties

To take ties to higher level, says Jaishankar; building renewed partnerships with large economies like India, China: Canada minister

Divya A

New Delhi, September 27

SIGNALLING FURTHER moves to improve ties between New Delhi and Ottawa, Canada's Foreign Minister Anita Anand underlined attempts to build "renewed partnerships" with large economies like India and China, while External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the two sides are preparing to take their relationship "to a higher level".

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EAM S Jaishankar with his Canadian counterpart Anita Anand in New York. ANI

Repeat

Canada

This comes ahead of a proposed visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Canada in December this year, when the two sides are aiming to finalise and sign the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

Jaishankar met Anand on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Saturday. "Always a pleasure to meet FM @AnitaAnandMP of Canada... A productive discussion as we prepare to take the relationship to a higher level," he said in a post on X, as he shared a short video clip of their meeting.

Meanwhile, in her address at the high-level UNGA General Debate on Saturday, Anand said that in the economic realm, Canada is focused on what it can control: diversifying its trade and catalysing a trillion dollars of investment in the country over the next five years.

She said for this, Ottawa is exploring new opportunities with

partners in the Indo-Pacific, the Gulf region and Latin America. "This includes building renewed partnerships with large economies like India and China," she said.

Anand also highlighted efforts with India and other nations to strengthen multilateralism and boost UN reforms. Earlier this week, India co-sponsored an inaugural multilateralism summit at the UN headquarters, with Australia, Barbados, Brazil, Canada and Kenya.

While New Delhi and Ottawa have hit a major reset in ties ever since Canadian Prime Minister Mike Carney took over in March 2025, both sides are also aiming at strategic autonomy and trade diversification in the wake of trade and tariff pressures from Washington.

Earlier this week, Carney said at the UN that Modi was expected to visit Canada around December this year. "We are making good progress in our trade negotiations with India. It is an exceptionally important relationship on many levels, people-to-people levels, security

levels, and also trade and economic," he said at a press conference Tuesday on the sidelines of the UNGA.

India and Canada had committed at the G20 last year to "look to conclude negotiations by the G20 this year", he said, while responding to questions on when Modi would visit Canada and how close Ottawa was to concluding a free trade agreement with India.

Ties between the two countries had nosedived in 2023, during the tenure of former prime minister Justin Trudeau, after he said that Canadian security agencies were pursuing allegations of a potential link between agents of the Indian government and the killing of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia — a claim rejected by India.

The diplomatic row led to reciprocal expulsions of diplomats and a reduction in diplomatic personnel.

In July this year, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police — as part of a larger investigation into transnational organised crime — said it had found no evidence

linking Indian government officials to Nijjar's killing.

In June last year, Carney and Modi agreed to take calibrated steps to restore stability, followed by the return of high commissioners and a series of high-level engagements.

Modi visited Canada for the G7 Summit last year. If he travels to Canada in December, it will be his first bilateral visit to the country after 2015.

Carney made a bilateral visit to India from February 27 to March 2 this year — the first visit by a Canadian Prime Minister to the country since 2018.

The two sides have been in touch at various levels — including several rounds of discussions and meetings between Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Canadian Minister of International Trade Maninder Sidhu. Goyal said earlier that the two sides have agreed to fast-track negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership, with the next round of talks scheduled to begin on October 5.

The agreement is engineered to expand bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030. **WITH PTI INPUTS**

OpenAI pauses training of models after agents probed US government sites

Bernard Condonap

New York, September 27

OPENAI SAID it has paused training of its latest artificial intelligence models as reports of AI agents going rogue mount.

The decision to halt development came just hours after the company disclosed Friday that it was reviewing several incidents from the summer in which OpenAI agents searching federal government websites acted in unexpected ways beyond what was asked of them while gathering and distributing information.

Separately, AI evaluator Translucence said agents that appeared to come from OpenAI tried unsuccessfully to hack into a Department of Education website, a detail that OpenAI has not confirmed. OpenAI said in a statement that it will resume training "only when we are confident that we have additional safeguards" in place, adding that it expects it will have to "hit pause" again as AI develops and other issues emerge.

AI labs are facing pressure from lawmakers and tech experts to slow development so they can build guardrails to stop agents from acting on their own, hacking websites and disclosing nonpublic information. The heads of both OpenAI and rival Anthropic have called for a slow-down too. It is the second time in three months that OpenAI has halted development of its models. The first came in July after disclosure of a cyberattack targeting AI

Bill Gates now joins calls for AI safeguards

AI REQUIRES safeguards that go beyond self-regulation, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates said in an interview that aired on Sunday, calling for legislation to be passed in Congress. "You need law enforcement and the politicians to get into the discussion about what safeguards and monitoring look like," Gates said in a taped interview on NBC's "Meet the Press" program. "And that has to be a required thing." "No one thinks self-regulation is enough," he said.

Gates argued that safeguards would not dramatically hinder the industry, and that the risks of not implementing them are real. "It's not a hoax at all," he told NBC. Gates has said he wants to meet Trump to discuss AI. "I hope that, given my life's work in the field, my saying how unique and different this is and how concerned I am will add to what he's hearing from other people," Gates said. **REUTERS**

startup Hugging Face, a now notorious incident that raised fears the industry was losing control.

In a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping this week, President Donald Trump agreed to share information on AI dangers and coordinate efforts to keep it safe. **AP**

5 'terrorists' held near U.K. base used by U.S.

Agence France-Presse

FAIRFORD

British counter-terrorism forces were probing "a major incident" near a base used by the U.S. Air Force in its war against Iran after arresting five men on suspicion of "preparing a terrorist act", the police said on Sunday.

Armed officers detained the group in the early hours after a call to emergency services about three "suspicious vehicles which appeared to be travelling towards the air base", London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement.

U.S. President Donald Trump said that the suspects were aiming at doing significant damage to the base. "We had them under investigation... they were looking to do big damage to our fort, and working with the British worked out great," he told presspersons. "We had them under view for a long time, and we got them," he added.



A U.S. B-1B Lancer bomber on the tarmac of the Fairford air base on Sunday. REUTERS

The suspects were initially held near the Royal Air Force Fairford air base in Gloucestershire on suspicion of carrying explosives. Some 85 households in the nearby village of Whelford were advised to evacuate and army bomb disposal experts were called in.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham was being kept updated on the incident, a British government spokesperson said.

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Russia sanctions in focus as Foreign Secretary Misri hosts U.S. delegation

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

Days after members of the U.S. Congress passed a new Russia sanctions law targeting India and other oil importers of Russian crude oil, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Sunday met with a five-member Congressional Delegation headed by the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Brian Mast.

The delegation included Bill co-sponsor Jimmy Patronis, Republican representative James Gallagher, and Democrat Haley Stevens, both of whom voted in favour of it, as well as Shri Thanedar, an Indian-born U.S. lawmaker, who had voted against the Bill.

The meeting follows days after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar raised India's concerns about possible sanctions with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in New York, and Mr. Misri discussed the issue with U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker.



Wide-ranging talks: Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri during the meeting with the U.S. Congressional delegation. PTI

The Lindsey O. Graham Sanctions against Russia and Iran Act (SRIA), passed in the U.S. Congress on September 16, mandates that U.S. President Donald Trump impose up to 100% sanctions on countries that buy Russian oil and extends sanctions on trade with Iran.

A determination on what kind of sanctions, if any, would be imposed on India is expected to be made next month, with a 30-day deadline pending. Officials did not comment on whether Mr. Misri discussed or received any as-

surances on a waiver of the sanctions that can be granted under certain conditions.

"Discussions covered the entire gamut of India-U.S. relations, including the recently enacted SRIA legislation and the future trajectory of the relationship," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post about the meeting that was held at Mr. Misri's residence. "They also exchanged views on international issues of mutual concern, energy security, counter-terrorism and

freedom of navigation," he added.

Mr. Mast is an American Army veteran who lost both his legs in a blast in Kandahar in 2010. He works on counter-terrorism issues and has an interest in South Asia. During the India-Pakistan conflict in May 2025, Mr. Mast said in an interview that he had spoken to "both sides", and sought de-escalation after India's strikes on Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attacks. He has also advocated sanctions on Russia and supports secondary sanctions that have now been proposed against China and India, which are major buyers of Russian oil. He has criticised China in particular for military supplies to Russia during the war in Ukraine.

Mr. Thanedar was the only member of the delegation who voted against the Bill, and was one of five Indian-Americans who opposed it, largely over concerns about the powers it would grant the U.S. President.

Iran stands firm on plan to reopen Hormuz after Trump rejects move

Tehran insists on diplomacy, but says it has never backed down from its rights; the proposal seeks cessation of all hostilities in the region, lifting of sanctions and release of frozen assets; U.S. envoy to the UN calls the deal cynical for asking too much

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON, TEHRAN

Iran stood firm on Sunday on its conditions for reopening the Strait of Hormuz, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's rejection of the proposal, leaving the war in West Asia locked in a stalemate.

Iran's plan called for a cessation of all hostilities in the region, including in Lebanon, according to Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, and a return to the conditions in the ceasefire deal that fell apart a few months ago.

That agreement had called for the release of frozen Iranian assets, the lift-



Ocean view: A boy stands with his bicycle on a beach overlooking vessels anchored in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas, Iran. AP

ing of sanctions on Iranian oil and an end to the U.S. naval blockade.

"Our conditions are clear, and any move toward reopening Hormuz is contingent upon these conditions being fulfilled.

We will not back down from them," Mr. Araghchi said on Sunday, according to state media. "We have never closed the door to diplomacy, but we have also never backed down from our rights."

But Mr. Trump said on Saturday that he rejected the truce deal. "They want to make a deal where they open the Strait immediately because they're losing so badly," he told reporters.

His Ambassador to the UN, Mike Waltz, accused Tehran of demanding too much in exchange for a return to the negotiating table. "This was, I think, a pretty cynical attempt to put something on the table that they knew was unacceptable. To ask for the release of the blockade, the sanctions, international sanctions and access to billions in assets, just to talk," he said.

Meanwhile, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said that

they seized an American submarine drone on Sunday in the Strait of Hormuz. It said the underwater vehicle was being used "for espionage purposes".

Economic isolation

Hailing new restrictions targeting Iran's airlines and banks, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Saturday that Washington's efforts to pressure countries to economically isolate Iran was delivering results.

"At my direction, teams were dispatched across the globe to engage with countries and demand action against Tehran," he said on X. "These efforts are delivering results".

Houthis accuse Saudi Arabia of deadly air raids on Yemen

Agence France-Presse

SANAA

Saudi airstrikes on Taiz in southwest Yemen caused dozens of casualties in an area controlled by the Houthis, the Iran-aligned group said on Sunday, as fighting escalated further after a truce broke down months ago.

The Houthi's military spokesman Yahya Saree accused Saudi Arabia of launching two air raids that hit a market on the outskirts of the city, saying nearly 50 people were killed or wounded.

The spokesman said blood was "unjustly and aggressively spilled" in a statement posted online, vowing there would be consequences for the attack.

Earlier, the group's Al-Masirah TV channel said a



Smoke rises near buildings in Taiz Governorate, Yemen, following air strikes. REUTERS

strike killed seven people and wounded 40 more at a market in Taiz, minutes after reporting that a Saudi fighter jet had targeted the area.

Images broadcast by Al-Masirah showed vehicles with blown-out windows

as well as damaged warehouses.

Fighting intensified in September as the Houthis launched a lightning offensive that saw them seize Yemen's entire Red Sea coast, including the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a vital shipping lane. The Houthis have in parallel launched a blockade on Saudi Arabian energy exports, already choked off by Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Schools in Riyadh shut

On Saturday, Saudi Arabia said it intercepted two Houthi drones that were heading in the direction of the capital Riyadh.

Schools in Riyadh announced on Sunday that they would be shifting to remote learning for a week, without giving a reason, according to messages sent to parents.