

THE HINDU ONLINE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said that "unilateral sanctions" are hurting the global economy, in a veiled attack on the West which has imposed sanctions on Russia over the Ukraine crisis.

He pitched for stronger and deeper cooperation among the member countries of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) at a time when the global economy is "not strong" and crisis is being witnessed even in prominent developed nations like Europe.

"Unilateral sanctions are hurting the global economy. So it is very essential that BRICS economies deepen their cooperation. BRICS should also work with other developed regions," he said while addressing the BRICS Business Council meeting here, soon after the start of the BRICS Summit.

He did not elaborate but his comments were seen as a veiled attack on the US and other countries of the West which have imposed sanctions on Russia over the Ukraine crisis.

The West imposed sanctions on Moscow after Crimea joined Russia in March 2014.

The standoff between them has been escalated because of Russia's role in the conflict in Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin as also Chinese President Xi Jinping, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and South African President Jacob Zuma were present when Mr. Modi spoke.

"The global economy currently is not strong. Even prominent developed economies like Europe are in crisis.

Financial markets are unstable," the Prime Minister noted as he advocated the need for tapping the "unique" strengths that each member country of the BRICS and developing linkages.

Modi pointed out that BRICS countries together form 44 per cent of the world population, contributing 40 per cent to the global GDP and 18 per cent to the world trade.

"There are several similarities and resources among the BRICS countries like agriculture, manufacturing, technology, services, human resources, sustainable development," he said, adding the economic cooperation among them would be a "driving force" for development.



Russia's President Vladimir Putin (R) greets Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a welcome ceremony in Ufa yesterday at the start of the 7th BRICS summit.

PHOTO: AFP

## Iraq police, militias clash in Baghdad

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi paramilitaries exchanged fire with police in Baghdad yesterday, the latest sign of tension between the government and the country's Shia militias, security sources said.

An interior ministry officer said around 15 gunmen from the Hashed al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilisation) force stormed an unfinished health ministry building in the Zayounah neighbourhood overnight.

"The guards went to the police, which dispatched units of around 60 men equipped with armoured personnel carriers to expel the gunmen, who opened fire," the officer said.

A police colonel said three policemen were wounded in the clashes, which resulted in the militiamen eventually leaving the building.

"The gunfire lasted for almost an hour," said Wafa Mohammed, who lives nearby. "We were scared inside our home and had no idea what was happening on the street."

A shop owner from the same neighbourhood said some members of the security services negotiated with the gunmen when the exchange of fire stopped.

The Hashed al-Shaabi is made up of volunteers and several mostly Shia militias. They are theoretically under the prime minister's command but largely escape his control.

## Major powers turn screws for Iran nuke deal

AFP, Vienna

Foreign ministers from major powers sought yesterday to turn the screws on a hard-bargaining Iran to finalise a historic nuclear deal on the eve of a deadline to present it to US lawmakers.

If the US Congress does not receive the text by early today morning Vienna time -- midnight in Washington -- it makes the approval process longer and potentially more problematic.

But despite this pressure, and almost two weeks of talks in the Austrian capital, it is unclear whether an accord aimed at ending a 13-year standoff can be sewn up at all.

US President Barack Obama held a video conference Wednesday with the US negotiators and "reviewed the progress of negotiations to date, and provided guidance" to the team, the White House said.

But Obama had reportedly told senators on Tuesday that the chances of an accord were "less than 50-50."

Building on a framework agreement from April, the deal would see Iran dismantle large parts of its nuclear infrastructure in order to put a nuclear bomb out of reach.

In return, a web of painful sanctions on Iran -- which denies wanting the bomb -- would be progressively lifted once the UN atomic watchdog verified Tehran had fulfilled its promises.

"Never have Iran and its counterparts been this close to a final accord. But success is far from assured... Serious political decisions still need to be made," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote in the Financial Times.

A spokesman for the Iranians said he did not rule out that the talks might run for several more days.

US Secretary of State John Kerry quipped yesterday at the start of a new meeting that they were in "Groundhog Day".

"Hopefully today (Thursday) is the last day," Iranian nuclear chief Ali

Akbar Salehi said as he met US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz.

Difficult issues in what will be a highly complex agreement include working out the pace and timing of sanctions relief and a stalled UN probe into alleged efforts by Iran to develop the atomic bomb.

Iran has also insisted there should be changes to a UN arms embargo and an easing of restrictions on missile sales, a prospect alarming rivals of Iran and allies of the United States in the region.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said from a BRICS summit in Ufa, Russia that he supported lifting the arms embargo "as one of the first sanction measures (to be lifted)".

The goal of the sanctions of getting Iran to negotiate had "long been reached" and arms would help Tehran combat Islamist State extremists -- a common enemy for the US, Iran and Russia.

## Amnesty urges EU to focus on rescuing migrants

AFP, London

Amnesty International yesterday warned European leaders against re-deploying warships used to rescue migrants to instead take on people-smuggling gangs, saying thousands of lives had been saved in the past months.

The London-based human rights watchdog hailed a decision at a European Union summit in April to send new naval resources for search and rescue missions.

But it warned that some of the warships may now be used to take part in an EU military operation that began last month intended to curb human trafficking.

"The implementation of this operation should not distract assets from the essential task of patrolling the high seas with a view to coming to the rescue of people in distress," Amnesty said in a statement.

"People will continue to die and large-scale search and rescue operations remain necessary for so long as high numbers continue to take this dangerous route."

Amnesty cited figures showing that one in 16 people attempting the sea crossing died in the first four months of 2015, prior to the emergency measures being agreed by EU leaders.

For May and June, that proportion had fallen to one in 427 people, the organisation said.

"Any withdrawal of resources, or diversion of their use, will jeopardise the current success in saving lives," it said.

The United Nations refugee chief has also warned the European Union about its military operation, saying migrants attempting the risky sea crossing from north African shores must be protected.

"Our position has been very clear: first priority rescue at sea -- lives need to be saved, nobody should be left to die in the Mediterranean," UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres has said.



A Bosnian muslim woman cry next to a truck carrying 136 coffins of newly identified victims of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in the town of Visoko, near Sarajevo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## UK to develop universal satellite

BBC ONLINE

The development of a completely novel type of telecommunications satellite has been approved.

To be called Quantum and built in the UK, the 3.5-tonne spacecraft will break new ground by being totally reconfigurable in orbit.

Normally, the major mission parameters on satellites - such as their ground coverage pattern and their operating frequencies - are fixed before launch.

Quantum is a European Space Agency telecoms project.

However, its development is actually a partnership with private industry, involving Paris-based satellite operator Eutelsat and the manufacturer Airbus Defence and Space.

The parties signed a contract yesterday at the Harwell Science Campus in Oxfordshire.

The ultra-flexible payload of Quantum

will be prepared by Airbus at its Portsmouth factory, and then integrated into the spacecraft bus, or chassis, at Surrey Satellite Technology Limited (SSTL) in Guildford. SSTL is an Airbus subsidiary.

Quantum should be delivered ready for launch in 2018.



The satellite will have the flexibility to take on new roles at anytime - in coverage, in frequency band, and power use.

If it needs to be moved, perhaps to fill in behind another satellite that has failed in orbit, it will simply mimic the profile of the lost platform.

## 36 rebels killed in south Yemen attacks

AFP, Aden

Yemeni fighters allied with exiled President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi killed 15 rebels in an attack on their checkpoints in the country's southern Abyan province yesterday, a military source said.

In second city Aden, 17 rebels were killed in air strikes by Saudi-led coalition warplanes, according to pro-Hadi military sources.

Fighters belonging to the pro-government Popular Resistance Committees in Abyan's Zinjibar attacked checkpoints of the 15th Infantry Brigade, which has defected and joined Iran-backed Shiite Huthi rebels, the military source said.

The southern fighters also besieged the headquarters of the brigade, which was later hit by warplanes from the coalition that launched an air campaign in March backing Hadi.

Southern tribesmen meanwhile killed four Huthi rebels in an ambush yesterday near Ataq, in Shabwa province, a local security source said.

Troops loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh have sided with the Huthis, who overran the capital in September and went on to seize control of several regions.

## Kabul plans Taliban talks to end bloodshed

AFP, Kabul

Afghan negotiators said yesterday their next round of talks with the Taliban would focus in detail on ways to end bloodshed in the country, wracked by nearly 40 years of war.

Government representatives struck a positive note after returning from their first face-to-face talks with militant commanders held on Tuesday in Pakistan aimed at ending the Taliban's 13-year insurgency.

The nascent talks have brought no let up in the Taliban's summer offensive, as the militants launched two suicide attacks in Kabul just hours before Tuesday's meeting in Murree, a hill station north of Islamabad.

The session, which lasted through the night, concluded with an agreement to meet again after the Muslim festival of Eid, due to start around July 18, and government negotiator Din Mohammad said the aim was for more substantive talks on ending the fighting.

"In that meeting, a detailed discussion will be focused on preventing bloodshed in Afghanistan," he told reporters in Kabul.

Several informal meetings have been held in recent months between Taliban representatives and Afghan officials and activists, but Tuesday's meeting is seen as a step forward.

The Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai -- the first time such a senior government figure has publicly met the militants.

Mohammad said the meeting also included a member of the Haqqani network, a hardline militant group blamed for some of the deadliest and most audacious attacks in Afghanistan in recent years.

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