

## Russia expects India to keep buying its oil

REUTERS, New Delhi

Russia expects to continue supplying oil to India despite warnings from the United States, Russian embassy officials in New Delhi said yesterday, adding that Moscow hopes trilateral talks will soon take place with India and China.

US President Donald Trump has announced an additional tariff of 25% on Indian goods exported to the US from August 27, as a punishment for buying Russian oil, which constitutes 35% of India's total imports compared with a negligible 0.2% before the Ukraine war.

"I want to highlight that despite the political situation, we can predict that the same level of oil import (by India)," Roman Babushkin, the charge d'affaires at the Russian embassy in India, told a press briefing.

He predicted India and Russia would find ways to overcome Trump's latest tariffs in their "national interests".

Trade talks between India and the US broke down over the opening up of India's vast farm and dairy sectors, as well as its purchases of Russian oil. The total tariff announced on Indian goods entering the US is 50%.

The Indian foreign ministry did not immediately reply to an emailed request for comment.

It has previously said the US decision to single out India for Russian purchases was "extremely unfortunate".

Russia's Deputy Trade Commissioner Evgeny Griva yesterday said buying oil from Russia is "very profitable" for India, which will not want to change its supplier.

On average Russia gives a 5%-7% discount to Indian buyers, he said, adding that Russia has a "very, very special mechanism" to continue oil supplies to India.



## UKRAINE SECURITY GUARANTEES

# Talks without Russia 'a road to nowhere'

Says Lavrov, slams Europe's 'clumsy' bid to win over Trump

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday said it had to be part of any discussion on security guarantees for Ukraine and downplayed the likelihood of an imminent summit with President Volodymyr Zelensky, tempering hopes for a quick peace deal.

Nato military chiefs were meanwhile scheduled to hold a virtual summit on security guarantees for Ukraine, the latest in a flurry of global diplomacy aimed at brokering an end to the nearly three-and-a-half year conflict.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that "seriously discussing security guarantees without the Russian Federation is a utopia, a road to nowhere".

Moscow signed the Budapest Memorandum in 1994, which was aimed at ensuring security for Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan in exchange for them giving up numerous nuclear weapons left from the Soviet era.

But Russia violated that first by taking Crimea in 2014, and then by starting a full-scale offensive in 2022, which has killed tens of thousands of people and forced millions to flee their homes.

On Tuesday, top US officer Dan Caine, Chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff, held talks with European military chiefs on the "best options for a potential Ukraine peace deal," a US defence official told AFP.

In eastern Ukraine, far from the diplomatic deliberations, Russian forces claimed fresh advances on the ground and Ukrainian officials reported more deaths from Russian attacks.

US President Donald Trump brought Zelensky and European leaders to the White House Monday, three days after his landmark encounter with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

Russia's long-serving foreign minister downplayed the meeting between Trump and European leaders at the White House, describing it as a "clumsy" attempt to change the US president's position on Ukraine.

Trump, long a fierce critic of the billions of dollars in US support to Ukraine, earlier said European nations were "willing to put people on the ground" to secure any settlement. He ruled out sending US troops but suggested the country might provide air support.

Russia has long said it will never tolerate the presence of any Western troops in Ukraine.

While Trump said Putin had agreed to meet Zelensky and accept some Western security guarantees for Ukraine, Russia has not confirmed this.

Lavrov also cast doubt on an imminent meeting between the sworn enemies, saying that any summit between Putin and Zelensky "must be prepared in the most meticulous way" so it does not lead to a "deterioration" of the situation surrounding the conflict.

Russia's defence ministry said on Telegram that its troops had captured the villages of Sutkhetse and Pankivka in the embattled Donetsk region. They are near a section of the front where the Russian army broke through Ukrainian defences last week, between the logistics hub of Pokrovsk and Kostiantynivka.

Six civilians were killed by Russian attacks across eastern and southern Ukraine yesterday, local authorities said.

One person died in Russia's western Bryansk region as a result of a Ukrainian drone strike.

Russia's aerial attacks on the northeastern town of Okhtyrka in the Sumy region wounded at least 14 people, including three children, according to regional governor Oleg Grygorov.

## Support grows for Palestinian statehood in US

REUTERS, Washington

A 58% majority of Americans believe that every country in the United Nations should recognize Palestine as a nation, according to a new Reuters/Ipsos poll, as Israel and Hamas considered a possible truce in the nearly two-year long war.

Some 33% of respondents did not agree that UN members should recognize a Palestinian state and 9% did not answer.

The six day poll, which closed on Monday, was taken within weeks of three countries, close U.S. allies Canada, Britain and France, announcing they intend to recognize the State of Palestine. This ratcheted up pressure on Israel as starvation spreads in Gaza.

The survey was taken amid hopes that Israel and Hamas would agree on a ceasefire to provide a break in the fighting, free some hostages and ease shipments of humanitarian assistance.

Two officials said on Tuesday Israel was studying Hamas' response to a potential deal for a 60-day truce and the release of half the Israeli hostages still held in Gaza.

Britain, Canada, Australia and several of their European allies said last week that the humanitarian crisis in the war-torn Palestinian enclave has reached "unimaginable levels," as aid groups warned that Gazans are on the verge of famine.

A larger majority of the Reuters/Ipsos poll respondents, 65%, said the US should take action in Gaza to help people facing starvation, with 28% disagreeing.

The poll also showed that 59% of Americans believe that Israel's military response in Gaza has been excessive.

## Admin officials, law enforcers involved

FROM PAGE 1

report in which it said the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD), the Sylhet administration, police, Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) and 42 others with political and business links were either directly involved or indirectly involved or were beneficiaries of the rampant stone looting.

The Daily Star has a copy of the report, which two officials confirmed as authentic. However, the ACC officials would not comment until the probe was complete.

The ACC report carries names of Sylhet's divisional commissioner, then deputy commissioner, superintendent of police, then upazila nirbahi officer and officer in charge of Companiganj.

Besides administration and law enforcement officials, names of leaders from across the political spectrum came up in the ACC report.

In response to public outrage, an ACC team visited the Sada Pathor site on August 13, collected evidence, and prepared the preliminary report.

The High Court, responding to a public interest litigation on August 14, ordered the authorities to recover looted stones, submit lists of those involved, and take action to protect the environment.

Meanwhile, the Sylhet city unit BNP held a press briefing yesterday afternoon to protest a national daily's report that accused them of involvement in the looting.

Rezaul Hasan Koyel Ludhi, acting president of Sylhet city BNP, said, "The report is false, baseless, and intentional. We are challenging its authenticity; otherwise, the newspaper should apologise. It is the Awami League that has been looting stones for the last 15 years, and to hide the real culprits, we are being accused."

Sylhet Jamaat and NCP said they would hold a press briefing about the allegations today.

Sylhet's Divisional Commissioner Khan

Meanwhile, joint forces, comprising members from the administration, police, Rab, BGB, and the army, are carrying out drives across the district to recover stones looted from Sada Pathor.

## From full nets to lighter hauls

FROM PAGE 1

the Meghna last week. The trip, involving nine crew members and 40 litres of fuel, cost Tk 10,000-15,000. Hasan Majhi caught just 6kg near Hajipur and Shahidpur, where depth has dropped to 7.5 feet.

Ersad, also from Nasir Majhi village, described sailing 30km into the sea with seven others on July 6, only to return with three hilsa. "We saw massive sandbars around Gozaria Char near Monpura."

From Chandpur to Monpura, sandbars now block channels, leaving only narrow navigable routes.

The ban ran from April 15 to June 11. But as Kalu Mia, a fisherman from Mohipur, put it: "Since the ban was lifted, barely any fisherman has returned home with a good haul."

Patuakhali's fisheries officer, Md Kamrul Islam, offered some hope: "We hope that once the weather improves, fishermen will be able to venture out to sea for longer and will get good hauls of hilsa. Last year, most fishermen caught good amounts of hilsa towards the end of the season [June–November]."

Officials and scientists give varying reasons for the shortage. Some, like those at the Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute in Chandpur, blame climate change for unpredictable weather that has kept fishermen ashore since early July.

"If fishermen could reach the sea and stay longer, they would catch more," said Md Abu Kawser Didar, a scientific officer.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, this July was 23.5 percent wetter than average, with three low-pressure systems on July 7, 14, and 24 bringing heavy rain. Barishal division recorded 878mm rainfall.

Officials said the active monsoon kept fishermen ashore.

But weather is only part of the problem. Others cite poor navigability, pollution, and hostile river ecology.

"Hilsa needs some ideal conditions to migrate to the river from the sea, such as fresh water, strong currents, at least 10m depth, and a minimum

something if we can't provide a suitable environment for hilsa, we will not get any."

Barishal Fisheries Office says migration is blocked at 20 points including Meghna, Payra, Baleshwar, Bishkhali, Andharmanik, Tetulia, Sugandha, and Gozaria. Divisional officer Md Alfaz Uddin Shaikh said a proposal for dredging has been submitted.



river width of 500m," said Molla Emdadullah, project director of the Hilsa Development and Management Project (HMDP).

"When the fish see there is no depth or not enough width in the river, they migrate to other rivers – those could be in Myanmar or India. They move away from Bangladesh when they face these barriers."

"Scientists are sure about

A 2022-2025 study by Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University found plankton levels in the Payra, Bishkhali, and Baleshwar rivers have dropped by at least 30 percent since 2020.

"Additionally, water depth has dropped drastically in many areas due to the formation of new sandbars, obstructing the natural movement of hilsa," said Mir Mohammad Ali, assistant professor at the

university. "Deep sea trawlers are fishing illegally near the coast, depleting hilsa. In some areas, depth is only 18-20 meters, far below the 75-80 needed for breeding."

Asked whether the Department of Fisheries has taken any initiative apart from imposing bans, HMDP's project director replied in the negative.

"But we're planning to develop a project that will focus on improving the environment of the river for hilsa breeding. We've seen reports that fish are dying in the Meghna in Chandpur due to pollution. The concentration of pollution will reach hilsa nurseries soon if we don't act now."

From 2003 to 2023, the national hilsa output rose, then fell by 42,000 tonnes in 2024.

In Barishal division, the country's largest hilsa hub, June output fell from 21,817 tonnes in 2024 to 14,496 this year. In July, the division produced 10,876 tonnes, compared to 15,470 last year – around 30 percent less. On July 25, landings were 290 tonnes, down from 500 in previous years.

As supply has tightened, prices have surged. In Dhaka markets, small hilsa now sells for Tk 1,450-1,600/kg, medium for Tk 1,850-2,000, and large for Tk 2,600-3,200 – up from Tk 650-1,300 last year.

According to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, hilsa prices have risen by about 33 percent since 2023. Consumer Association data shows hilsa sold for Tk 417/kg in 2010, Tk 789 in 2019, and Tk 3,500 in 2025, as per newspaper reports.

Experts warn that without urgent steps to restore rivers, hilsa may abandon Bangladeshi waters – a blow to both livelihoods and a key part of the nation's identity.

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