

Gulf energy attacks 'unacceptable', India says as supply fears mount

AFP | New Delhi, India

India condemned strikes on energy facilities in the Gulf as "unacceptable" yesterday warning they risk worsening global energy flows.

The assault on Qatar's Ras Laffan facility has stoked fears of wider disruptions to fuel supplies, including for India, which relies on Qatar for over 40% of its LNG needs -- crucial for power generation, industry, fertiliser production and household cooking.

The latest strikes were "unacceptable and need to cease", India's foreign ministry said, reiterating New Delhi's call to avoid targeting energy infrastructure.

"Recent attacks against energy installations in different

Treasury chief says US may 'unsanction' Iran oil already being shipped

AFP | Washington, United States

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said yesterday that Washington might "unsanction" Iranian oil that is already being shipped, as energy prices soar due to the war in the Middle East. Bessent's com-

ments to Fox Business came as oil and gas prices made a renewed surge after Iran hit the world's biggest liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility in Qatar and threatened to destroy the region's energy infrastructure.

Bessent added in the interview that the US government

could also release more oil from its strategic reserves.

Tehran's retaliation brought commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz to a virtual halt, snarling energy supply chains. Around a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas passes through the critical

waterway during peacetime.

Recently, the United States also temporarily allowed the sale of sanctioned Russian oil that is at sea. On Wednesday, Trump temporarily waived a century-old maritime shipping law in an attempt to help ease energy prices.

locations across this region are... deeply disturbing and only serve to further destabilise an already uncertain energy scenario for

the whole world," it said in a statement.

With gas shipments already reduced, New Delhi fears a fresh

supply crunch, rising costs and deeper economic strain across sectors dependent on steady imports.

Energy prices have already spiralled globally since tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, which normally car-

ries around a fifth of the world's oil and LNG, was brought to a near-standstill by the threat of Iranian attacks.

As many as 22 Indian ships with over 600 crew are stuck in the Gulf as the key energy corridor remains disrupted.

Indian foreign ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said the country's energy supplies had already been impacted by the closure of the strait.

"Now with the latest attacks our LNG supply is going to be impacted," he told reporters during a news briefing in New Delhi on Thursday.

"We are in touch with all the stakeholders there to see how best we can secure our energy needs and there can be unimpeded transit for our cargo."

EU summit fails to rally Orban behind stalled Ukraine loan

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

EU leaders failed to persuade Hungary's Viktor Orban to lift his block on a massive loan to support Ukraine's war effort at summit talks yesterday, leaving the much-needed funding in limbo.

Moscow's closest partner in the bloc, the nationalist prime minister has long resisted helping Kyiv to repel Russia's invasion, stalling EU aid and repeated rounds of sanctions.

This time around, Orban is holding up a 90-billion-euro (\$104 billion) loan as leverage in a feud over damage to a pipeline running through Ukraine -- which has choked the flow of Russian oil to Hungary and

Slovakia.

"The Hungarian position is very simple. We are ready to support Ukraine when we get our oil, which is blocked by them," Orban said on arrival at the summit, which Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky addressed by videolink.

Orban had made it clear he planned to play hardball, as he leans into anti-EU and anti-Ukrainian narratives ahead of close-fought national elec-

tions on April 12 -- to the exasperation of fellow EU leaders.

And despite concerted pressure from his counterparts in Brussels, he refused to budge.

"No movement from Orban," summed up an EU diplomat after the Ukraine talks concluded. "We all know it's linked to the elections -- we are going to have to be creative."

The EU's top diplomat Kaja Kallas warned earlier it was "really, really time" to show support by unlocking funding for Ukraine for this year and the next -- which Hungary's leader signed up to in December along with the rest of the bloc.

But only 25 of the bloc's 27 leaders endorsed Thursday summit conclusions reaffirming their intent to begin disbursing the funds next month, with diplomats confirming the holdouts were Budapest and Bratislava.

Leaders agreed to revisit the matter, which requires unanimity, at their next meeting

planned in late April.

Election 'weapon'

At the root of the standoff is a weeks-long dispute in which landlocked Hungary and Slovakia accuse Ukraine of stalling on pipeline repairs -- while Zelensky has called it "blackmail" to link the issue to support for Kyiv's war effort.

The European Commission moved this week to unblock the situation by sending a team to help restore oil transit, but Orban dismissed the scheme as a "fairy tale".

"We are waiting for the oil," Orban told reporters -- calling the matter "existential" for Hungary.

Many of his counterparts see the block as squarely motivated by national politics.

"He's using Ukraine as a weapon in his election campaign, and it's not good. We had a deal," Finland's Prime Minister Petteri Orpo told reporters in Brussels.

Belgium's Bart de Wever likewise said Orban's veto seemed to be "part of his election campaign," calling his U-turn "unacceptable".

Trump says told Netanyahu not to attack Iran gas fields

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he had told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to strike any more Iranian gas fields, seeking to distance himself from an attack by a key ally that has shaken world energy markets.

Trump insisted on social media overnight that he "knew nothing" about Wednesday's strike by Israel on the South Pars gas field in Iran, which retaliated to the attack by hitting Qatari energy sites.

Asked in the Oval Office whether he had talked to Netanyahu about attacking Iranian gas fields, Trump replied: "I did. I told him, don't do that, and he won't do that."

"You know, we're independent. We get along great. It's coordinated, but on occasion, he'll do something, and if I don't like it...and so we're not doing that anymore."

Trump's comments come despite the fact that US sources said on Wednesday that Washington was aware of the attack, although it had not participat-

ed in it.

Trump has previously said the United States is holding off from launching attacks on Iran's energy facilities, as the nearly three-week-old war has already sent global oil prices spiking.

At the same time, he also warned on his Truth Social network late Wednesday that the United States would "massively blow up" the South Pars field if Tehran did not stop attacking Qatar.



Iran holds the world's third-largest proven oil reserves, with about 208-209 billion barrels, accounting for roughly 12% of global reserves.

Oman foreign minister slams US war on Iran, blames Israel

AFP | Paris, France

A negotiated deal between the United States and Iran to avert war "appeared really possible", Oman's foreign minister who mediated talks between the two sides said in an article published on Thursday, while blaming Israel for the ongoing conflict.

Writing in The Economist, Badr Albusaidi abandoned the usual reserve of diplomatic language to call the war a "catastrophe" and said US President Donald Trump's administration had "lost control of its own foreign policy".

Albusaidi claimed the US and

Iran proposals surprised UK team at Geneva talks

Iran's proposals were "significant enough to prevent a rush to war", The Guardian reported earlier, quoting Britain's national security adviser Jonathan Powell, who attended the final round of US-Iran talks

in Geneva.

The UK team was said to have been surprised by the scope of the proposals put forward by Tehran, an anonymous former official briefed on the discussions told the newspaper.

The report added that the US negotiating team included Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, and did not bring along a technical advisory group to address complex nuclear issues.

Islamic republic.

He mediated a second round of indirect negotiations that re-

sumed in Oman on February 6, with the final round held in Geneva on February 26.

"It was a shock but not a surprise when on February 28th -- just a few hours after the latest and most substantive talks -- Israel and America again launched an unlawful military strike against the peace that had briefly appeared really possible," Albusaidi wrote.

The details of what was on the table in Geneva is of major significance, experts say, because Trump justified the war by saying Iran posed an "imminent" threat with its nuclear programme.

Albusaidi blamed "Israel's

leadership" for persuading Trump that "an unconditional surrender would swiftly follow the initial assault and the assassination of the supreme leader" Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the opening salvo of the war.

"The American administration's greatest miscalculation, of course, was allowing itself to be drawn into this war in the first place."

"America's friends have a responsibility to tell the truth," he continued, adding that one of the messages "involves indicating the extent to which America has lost control of its own foreign policy".