

India, Moldova discuss UNSC reforms, fight against terror

The President held bilateral discussions with her Moldovan counterpart Maia Sandu.



President Droupadi Murmu receives a ceremonial welcome from Moldovan counterpart Maia Sandu in Chisinau on Monday. (PTI)

PTI | New Delhi

INDIA AND Moldova discussed reforms of multilateral organisations, including the UN Security Council, and cooperation in the fight against terrorism, as President Droupadi Murmu landed in Chisinau on her state visit to the country. Murmu is the first Indian head of state to visit the landlocked Eastern European country since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992.

The President held bilateral discussions with her Moldovan counterpart Maia Sandu, where the two leaders explored new avenues of cooperation in trade and investment, digital transformation, information technology, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, education, culture and capacity building, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Briefing the media, MEA's Secretary (West) Sibi George said, "They also discussed cooperation in (the) fight against terrorism. Both sides discussed (the) importance of reforms of multilateral organisations, including the UNSC."

As a special gesture of friendship, Murmu presented a bust of Mahatma Gandhi to President Sandu. The President laid a wreath at the Monument of Stefan cel Mare

si Sfânt (Stephen the Great), paying tribute to one of Moldova's most revered national figures.

As part of her day-long visit, Murmu met Igor Grosu, speaker of the Moldovan parliament, and interacted with members of the India-Moldova Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Later, both Presidents jointly addressed the India-Moldova Business Forum, which brought together leading business representatives from both countries to explore fresh opportunities in trade, investment, innovation and technology.

Both countries are also exploring cooperation in digital public infrastructure, innovation, food processing, logistics and skills development, creating significant potential for mutually beneficial investment, employment and sustainable growth, the MEA official added.

The business delegation from India comprises around 20 members across various sectors including agritech, IT, consulting, defence, e-commerce, exports, engineering, construction, hospitality, human resource, manufacturing, pharmaceutical and healthcare. Around 2,000 Indian students are currently pursuing higher education in Moldova, particularly medical studies. Murmu also invited President Sandu to visit India at a mutually convenient date.

Israel-Lebanon talks to be held in Italy on August 4: Italian FM

Rome, Italy

A new round of US-mediated talks between Israel and Lebanon will be held in Italy on August 4, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said

on Wednesday.

"We will host another session of dialogue on August 4," Tajani told parliament, following a round of talks between delegations from the two countries in Rome last week.

IRANIAN ISLANDS: STRATEGIC GATEWAYS

COMMANDING THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ AND BEYOND

From oil lifelines to military strongholds, these islands are key to Iran's power and the Gulf's security.

LARAK

THE STRAIT'S 'TOLLBOOTH'

- Sits at the narrowest point of the Strait of Hormuz – the world's key shipping route.
- Site for Iranian oil exports since 1987, also hosts a military base.
- During the early war blockade, it was a stopping point for ships Iran allowed in or out – charging substantial fees.
- Maritime data firm Lloyd's List Intelligence dubbed it "Tehran's tollbooth".
- The US vehemently opposes Iran's plans to charge tolls in the Hormuz.

KHARG

IRAN'S OIL POWERHOUSE

- Home to Iran's largest oil terminal, accounting for ~90% of its crude export's (JP Morgan).
- Targeted by US airstrikes in mid-March.
- Trump called it Iran's "crown jewel"; said military sites were "totally obliterated", but energy infrastructure left unharmed.
- Developed in the 1960s–70s as mainland waters were too shallow for supertankers.
- Despite new export routes like Jask (2021), JP Morgan calls Kharg "a critical vulnerability" and "a cornerstone of Iran's economy".
- US has hinted at seizing the island, but experts say a military operation would be "very difficult".

QESHM

BEAUTY, TOURISM & FIREPOWER

- Largest island in the Gulf, ~100 km long, dominating the entrance to the Gulf.
- Popular tourist destination: UNESCO-listed rock formations, turquoise waters, mangroves and relaxed vibe.
- "Qeshm used to be very poor, but tourism in recent years has brought the economy to life." – Local resident
- Heavily militarised with strike capabilities that can target shipping in the Gulf or invading US troops.
- US struck the island as recently as last week, according to Iranian state media.

DISPUTED ISLANDS

FORTIFIED AND ARMED

LESSER TUNB • GREATER TUNB • ABU MUSA
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GULF

- Along with the islet of Siri, these islands have been fortified into mini-fortresses with anti-ship missiles.
- Tehran stations Revolutionary Guards' naval forces on the islands.
- In 2025, Iran deployed new missile systems capable of targeting nearby "enemy bases, ships and equipment", Iranian media reported.
- Strategic position in the Gulf strengthens Iran's control and surveillance over vital shipping lanes.

CONTROL THE STRAIT, CONTROL THE FLOW OF GLOBAL TRADE.

SAFEGUARDING OIL INFRASTRUCTURE = SAFEGUARDING ECONOMY.

MILITARY STRONGHOLDS THAT DETER, DEFEND AND PROJECT POWER.

THESE ISLANDS ARE SMALL IN SIZE, BUT HUGE IN STRATEGIC IMPACT.

‘ONE BRIDGE OR POWER PLANT’

Trump vows tit-for-tat strikes on Iran power plants

AFP | Washington, United States

President Donald Trump yesterday pledged that the United States would bomb Iranian civil infrastructure every time Tehran fires at ships in the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

"From this point forward, any time the Islamic Republic of Iran shoots at a ship in the Strait of Hormuz, whether it be by Missile, Rocket, Drone, or any other device or weapon, the United States will bomb and destroy ONE BRIDGE OR POWER PLANT," he wrote on his Truth Social network.

Trump said this included Iranian facilities "located next to, or in, the Capital City of Tehran."

Trump's threat came shortly before he headed to an airbase for the return of the remains of three US troops killed in Iranian attacks on American military facilities in the Gulf.

The US leader said he was go-

US plans to announce nuclear agreement with Saudi: media

AFP | Washington, United States

The United States plans to announce a landmark deal with Saudi Arabia that would help establish a civilian nuclear programme in the kingdom, according to media reports.

The New York Times, citing two unidentified US officials, reported on Tuesday that the Trump administration planned to formally sign and announce the deal with the Saudis.

President Donald Trump's administration said the agreement would provide billions of dollars for the US nuclear industry.

A provision in the 30-year deal would potentially see US companies build a uranium enrichment facility in Saudi Arabia, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The deal is expected to be submitted to Congress in the coming days, but its approval is not required for it to go through.

The United States signed a nuclear agreement with the kingdom's neighbor the United Arab Emirates in 2009, although the country does not enrich its own uranium.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio declined to confirm the Saudi Arabia deal in Manila on Wednesday, deferring to the White House, but dismissed fears it could lead to nuclear proliferation.

"Suffice it to say, the US is not going to reach any agreement with any country in the world that leads to the risk of proliferation," he told reporters on the sidelines of a summit of Southeast Asian foreign ministers.

US military facilities in the Gulf.

The US military said the dignified transfer service at Dover airbase in Delaware was for two service members killed in an Iranian attack on a base in Jordan and a service member killed during a controlled detonation of a drone in Iraq.

A third service member remains missing from the Jordan attack.

Trump has vowed to avenge the deaths of all US troops "many times over" and stepped up threats to target civilian infrastructure. The total number of US deaths since the start of the war is 18.

The US leader also repeated threats on Tuesday to strike what he said was a secret Iranian nuclear complex called Pickaxe Mountain.

Iran denies the existence of any facility at the site, which it calls Kolang mountain.



The United States has 95 operating commercial nuclear power reactors, overseen by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The fleet consists of 64 pressurised-water reactors (PWRs) and 31 boiling-water reactors (BWRs).

ing to "honor our heroes and they're indeed great heroes."

"All of them said, very strongly, that we can't let Iran have a nuclear weapon, so we're going to honor them... For me it's one of the hardest things to do as president but it has to be done."

Trump rejected polls that show the Iran war is unpopular with US voters ahead of midterm elections in November, with rising oil prices fueling a spike in the cost of living.

The war has already cost Washington \$37.5 billion.

"Americans don't want high gasoline prices but they're not against the war, that just came out loud and clear," he said.

The United States has stepped up strikes against Iran since a preliminary ceasefire deal collapsed amid fighting over the strait, carrying out 11 straight days of attacks on the Islamic republic.

Iran has retaliated by firing at