

EU Lawmakers Reach Deal To Ban Russian Gas Imports By Autumn 2027

Beijing, 8 June: European Union lawmakers and member states reached a deal Wednesday to ban all imports of Russian gas by autumn 2027, as the bloc seeks to choke off key funds feeding Moscow's war chest.

"This is the dawn of a new era, the era of Europe's full energy independence from Russia," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen told reporters following the overnight deal.

Aimed at breaking a reliance the bloc has struggled to end despite the invasion of Ukraine, the accord marks a compromise between EU capitals and the European Parliament, which wanted the ban to hit sooner.

"We've made it: Europe is turning off the tap on Russian gas, forever," EU Energy Commissioner Dan Jorgensen wrote on X. "We've chosen energy security and independence for Europe. No more blackmail. No more market manipulation by Putin. We stand strong with Ukraine."

But the Kremlin hit back, saying the move would "accelerate" a decline of the EU's economy as it would force the bloc to resort to more expensive alternatives.

Under the deal, long-term pipeline contracts -- considered the most sensitive because they can run for decades -- will be banned from September 30, 2027, provided storage levels are sufficient, and no later than November 1, 2027.

For liquefied natural gas (LNG), long-term contracts will be prohibited from January 1, 2027, in line with a call by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to tighten sanctions on Moscow.

Short-term contracts will be phased out earlier: from April 25, 2026 for LNG and June 17, 2026 for pipeline gas.

The move aims "to end dependency on Russian energy following Russia's weaponisation of gas supplies with significant effects on the European energy market," said a European Council statement.

The timeline must still get final approval from the European Parliament and member states. European companies will be able to invoke "force majeure" to legally justify breaking existing contracts, citing the EU import ban.

Weaning Off Russian Energy

The overnight deal also calls on the Commission to draft a plan in the coming months to end Russian oil imports to Hungary and Slovakia by the end of 2027.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban -- the EU leader closest to the Kremlin -- thumbed his nose at Brussels last month by vowing to keep importing Russian hydrocarbons during a meeting with President Vladimir Putin.

The EU moved to wean itself off Russian oil in 2022 but granted exemptions to the two landlocked countries.

Nearly four years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the bloc is seeking to finally cut off a lucrative stream of energy revenue for Moscow.

The share of Russian gas in EU imports has fallen from 45 per cent in 2021 to 19 per cent in 2024. But while Europe has slashed pipeline deliveries, it has partly turned to LNG -- shipped by sea, unloaded at ports, and fed back into the network.

Behind the United States (45 per cent), Russia remains a key supplier, accounting for 20 per cent of EU LNG imports in 2024 -- around 20 billion cubic meters out of roughly 100 billion. Imports of Russian LNG into the EU were still expected to amount to 15 billion euros this year.

The 43-year-old airline engineer joined the crowd waiting anxiously at a nearby school-turned-shelter on Wednesday for news on rescue efforts.

"Unusual": 3 Envoys' Opinion Piece Ahead Of Putin Visit Ticks Off New Delhi

Moscow, 8 June: A joint opinion piece by envoys of three Western countries to India -- the UK, France and Germany -- right before Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit has ticked off New Delhi. Top officials in the Ministry of External Affairs said they have taken note of the article published in The Times of India. They said the timing of the article is "very unusual" and that "it is not an acceptable diplomatic practice to give public advice on India's relations with a third country."

The joint piece, which carries the bylines of French Ambassador Thierry Mathou, German High Commissioner Philipp Ackermann and the UK High Commissioner Lindy Cameron, is headlined, "World Wants The Ukraine War To End, But Russia Doesn't Seem Serious About Peace."

The article criticises the Russian President for the continuing war in Ukraine. Referring to drone and missile attacks, it says, "These are not the actions of someone that is serious about peace. Neither are these indiscriminate attacks mere accidents - they are a systematic choice by Russia to wage its war of aggression with absolute ruthlessness. And it must end." The article accuses Moscow of refusing to engage in meaningful negotiations or agreeing to a ceasefire.

The envoys have written in the article that the governments of Germany, France and the UK - all of them NATO members - will continue to provide "ironclad support" to Ukraine. "As President Putin stalls and delays on se-

rious peace talks, we will continue to step up our military and non-military support to Ukraine, so that it can rightly defend its people, its land and its sovereignty," it says.

The timing of the article is significant as it came days before the Russian President lands in Delhi to attend the annual India-Russia summit at the invitation of Prime Minister Modi.

Ahead of the visit, Putin has said Moscow aims to "elevate cooperation"



with India and China to a "qualitatively new level". "We aim to elevate cooperation with the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India to a qualitatively new level by strengthening its technological component. This is the objective of numerous joint projects in energy, industry, space, agriculture, and other sectors," he said.

Ever since the war in Ukraine began in 2022, India has refused to join

any camp and balanced its response by its strategic interests. Prime Minister Modi has repeatedly said "this is not an era of war" and called for an end to the military action. Russia is India's all-weather ally, and New Delhi also has strong ties with NATO partners, including the US, which has sanctioned Moscow over the war. New Delhi has deftly balanced these ties in a diplomatic tightrope walk.

India has earlier defended its

the envoys of Germany, France and UK, while promising their countries will stand by Ukraine

The Kremlin said on Wednesday that President Vladimir Putin had accepted some US proposals to end the war in Ukraine and rejected others and that Russia was ready to meet US negotiators as many times as it took to reach an agreement. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was speaking after talks in Moscow between Putin and US President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, and son-in-law Jared Kushner went into the early hours of Wednesday morning, with a Kremlin aide saying afterwards that "compromises have not yet been found."

Peskov told reporters on Wednesday it would be wrong to say that Putin had rejected the US proposals, noting that the meeting was a first face-to-face exchange of opinions on them. Putin had accepted some of the proposals and rejected others in what was a normal negotiation process, Peskov said.

For over three years now, Ukrainians have defended their country with courage and fierce determination against Russia's unprovoked war of aggression on their home. Russia could end the war tomorrow by withdrawing its forces and ending its illegal invasion, or at least by agreeing to a ceasefire and truly engaging in negotiations. Instead, Russian attacks have risen sharply in 2025, and since peace talks began, President Putin has launched 22 of his largest air attacks of the entire war on Ukraine.



German Presidents plane landed around mid-morning at London's Heathrow Airport on Wednesday.

NATO Allies Pledge To Buy US Arms Worth Millions For Ukraine

Afghanistan, 8 June: NATO countries pledged Wednesday to buy hundreds of millions more dollars of US arms for Ukraine, as Russian President Vladimir Putin was told to end his "bluster" and get serious on peace talks.

Foreign ministers from the 32-nation alliance gathered in Brussels to discuss Washington's push to end the fighting -- but US top diplomat Marco Rubio was skipping the meeting.

The gathering comes after US envoys appeared to fail to make a major breakthrough on efforts to stop the war in five hours of talks with Putin in Moscow.

"The peace talks are ongoing, that's good, but at the same time, we have to make sure that whilst they take place -- and we are not sure when they will end -- that Ukraine is in the strongest possible position to keep the fight going,"

NATO chief Mark Rutte said.

As part of those moves Germany, Poland, the Norway, The Netherlands and Canada said they would together commit some one billion dollars more to a scheme to buy American weapons for Ukraine.

"Ukraine needs to stay strong and we, the allies in the



largest and most successful military alliance in history, need to stay firm, and we need to stay committed," Norway's Espen Barth Eide said.

Europe has largely been left on the sidelines of US President Donald Trump's push to end the war and the

absence in Brussels of Rubio, who sent a deputy, risked reinforcing that impression.

A string of ministers said that Putin did not appear so far to be willing to make any concessions at talks with Washington's representatives.

"President Putin should end the bluster and the bloodshed and be ready to come to the table and to support a just and lasting peace for Ukraine," said British foreign minister Yvette Cooper.

They also pushed back against comments from the Russian president that he did not want conflict with Europe, but was "ready" for war.

"It's the rhetoric that Russia is making use of in order to intimidate us, and we shouldn't take such talks too seriously," said Finland's Elina Valtonen. "We have very strong capabilities as NATO, as Europe, and we are ramping up by the day."

German President Arrives In UK, First Visit By Head Of State In 27 Years

London, 8 June: German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier arrived in London on Wednesday for the start of a state visit, the first by the official German head of state in 27 years. The three-day trip, which includes a Windsor Castle state banquet and a speech to parliament, takes place as a deepening security alliance has helped rebuild London-Berlin ties that frayed in the turbulent post-Brexit years.

Steinmeier will meet Prime Minister Keir Starmer later Wednesday for talks focusing on joint support for Ukraine in the war with Russia, the driving theme of closer co-operation between London and Berlin.

Steinmeier is reciprocating a 2023 state visit by King Charles III to Germany, his first as monarch. His plane landed around mid-morning at London's Heathrow Airport on Wednesday.

The plane was parked and military personnel flanked a red carpet, but for

over 30 minutes there was no sign of the German president.

Eventually he descended from the plane after the arrival of the heir to the throne, Prince William and his wife, Catherine.

A source in Steinmeier's office said the visit reflects "a new era in relations between our two countries".

After a post-Brexit period in which "Great Britain distanced itself from Europe ... we now have the impression that they are moving back", the source said.

Steinmeier was foreign minister when the Brexit referendum occurred and had choice words back then for the "irresponsible politicians" who "lured" Britain into leaving the EU.

However, ties across the English Channel improved under Conservative prime minister Rishi Sunak, and the trend has continued under his centre-left Labour successor Keir Starmer.

The visit comes as both the German and British governments face pressure from hard-right, anti-immigration parties -- the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the Reform UK Party led by Nigel Farage.

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the political turmoil unleashed by the Trump administration have led key European powers to forge closer ties, including World War I and II-era foes Germany and Britain. In October 2024, western Europe's two biggest military spenders signed a defence pact, followed by their first "friendship treaty" in July.

"The core of the relationship is in the security and foreign policy field," said Nicolai von Ondarza from the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. But despite closer ties, Ondarza told AFP, "the UK is still much less present in German political debate than it has been in the past".

Sri Lanka Needs \$7 Billion To Rebuild After Cyclone Ditwah Kills 465

Colombo, 8 June: Sri Lankan authorities said Wednesday they would need some \$7 billion to rebuild homes, industries and roads destroyed by Cyclone Ditwah, which has left at least 465 people dead so far. Hopes have faded for the 366 other people unaccounted for after mudslides and floods triggered by the cyclone, which brought record rains across the island last week.

"Our initial estimate is that we will need about six to seven billion dollars for the reconstruction," said Prabath Chandrakerthi, the Commissioner-General of Essential Services who is leading the massive recovery effort. Chandrakerthi added that the government was providing 25,000 rupees (\$81) to each family to help clean their homes, while those who lost their homes would receive up to 2.5 million rupees (\$8,100).

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake said foreign assistance was essential to finance the recovery, as the

country was still emerging from its worst ever economic crisis three years ago.

Dissanayake declared a state of emergency on Saturday and has vowed to rebuild with international support.

"We were just coming out of the economic crisis when we were hit by this dis-



aster, which is the biggest challenge faced by any government," Dissanayake told his top officials on Tuesday.

Sri Lanka declared a sovereign default on its \$46 billion external debt in April 2022 after the country ran out of foreign exchange to finance even the most essential imports, such as food, fuel and medicines. The country secured a \$2.9 bil-

lion bailout loan from the IMF, which has said the economy has since stabilised, but Sri Lanka must maintain its reforms, including austerity measures.

The crisis in 2022 led to months of street protests which forced then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down.

Floodwaters in the capital Colombo were receding Wednesday after major flooding over the weekend. Over 1.5 million people in the country have been affected by the natural disaster, with some 200,000 in state-run shelters.

Some of the worst-affected areas in the central hills remain inaccessible, and authorities were working to clear the roads and restore communication lines. Despite the disaster, the tourism-reliant country welcomed a luxury cruiser to Colombo port on Tuesday, authorities said. The arrival sends "a clear message to the world: Sri Lanka is safe, open, and ready to embrace visitors once again," the country's tourist board said.

Trump Deserves Credit For Peace Deal In "Dangerous" India-Pak Clash: Marco

Earlier in the meeting, US President Donald Trump repeated his claim of resolving several global conflicts

Washington, 8 June: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio claimed that American President Donald Trump brokered several peace deals, including the one between India and Pakistan, and said that he should receive the Nobel Prize for the "eight wars" he ended. Speaking about the Russia-Ukraine war, he said, "We ended eight wars... But we're going to do one more, I think, I hope."

When the newspaper asked the White House about Trump's MRI results and reports that he had been "falling asleep in the Oval Office", Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt instead defended his energy and shifted attention to former President Joe Biden, 82, the report added.

Leavitt on Monday dou-

bled down on her criticism,

accusing the newspaper and its reporter of making politically motivated claims.

"I will point out one fake news story over the week-

end... that said that he's doing less than he did in his first term or he might not be fit for the job. That is unequivocally false," she said.

Calling out the same reporter for previously praising Biden's health after a fall, Leavitt said, "Same outlet, same reporter who wrote that President Trump is not fit for

is." She added that Barbabella's memo provided "quite a bit of detail in the effort of transparency," saying, "The president promised it last night and we have it delivered today."

According to the memo, imaging revealed no arterial narrowing, no abnormalities in the heart or major vessels, and no issues affecting blood flow. Trump's cardiovascular system, Barbabella wrote, "shows excellent health."

The abdominal scan also showed that "everything evaluated is functioning within normal limits with no acute or chronic concerns." The physician described such imaging as standard for an "executive physical" at Trump's age.

The White House had

vascular health, his doctor said Monday, citing an MRI taken during an unannounced hospital visit that ignited fresh scrutiny over his medical condition. The Republican billionaire, who turns 80 in June, has long faced criticism for limited transparency around his health.

His sudden October 10 trip to Walter Reed medical center -- outside the usual annual exam -- spurred speculation about what prompted the check-up. But in a memo released by the White House, physician Sean Barbabella said the advanced imaging was purely preventive, intended "to identify issues early, confirm overall health, and ensure he maintains long-term vitality."

