

Qatar says, ~~Israel-Hamas ceasefire~~ to go into effect at 8:30 am today

CAIRO, Jan 18 (AP)

THE ceasefire between Hamas and Israel will go into effect in less than 24 hours, Qatar's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday.

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In a post on X, Foreign Minister Majid al-Ansari said the ceasefire will start at 8:30 am (6:30 GMT) on Sunday, and advised people to exercise caution and wait for directions from officials.

Early Saturday morning, Israel's Cabinet approved the deal for a ceasefire in Gaza that would



release dozens of hostages and pause the 15-month war with Hamas, bringing the sides a step

closer to ending their deadliest and most destructive fighting ever.

Despite the ceasefire news, sirens sounded across central Israel on Saturday, with the army saying it intercepted projectiles launched from Yemen.

The Iran-backed Houthis have stepped up their missile attacks in recent weeks. The group says the attacks are part of its campaign aimed at pressuring Israel and the West over the war in Gaza.

There were also continued Israeli strikes into Gaza. The Palestinian Health Ministry said at least 23 people were killed the previous day.

Under the first phase of the ceasefire, 33 hostages are set to be released over the next six weeks, in exchange for hundreds

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NITI Aayog's Virmani revises FY'25 GDP growth projection for India amidst global uncertainty

KOLKATA, Jan 18 (PTI)

NITI Aayog member and renowned economist Arvind Virmani on Saturday said he has revised his GDP growth projection for India on the lower side for FY'25 due to rising global uncertainties and risks, particularly from the United States and China.

Virmani, who had earlier predicted a GDP growth in the range of 6.5-7.5 per cent, adjusted the projection to 6.5-7 per cent now with high probability of it being sub-7 per cent, amidst heightened risk aversion stemming from global political and economic challenges.

"My focus from the beginning of the year was 7 per cent plus minus 0.5 per cent, which means 6.5-7.5 per cent. But now I am revising it to 6.5-7 per cent. The



political uncertainties created by the US elections is much higher than I had anticipated," Virmani said. "The US election uncertainty has a domino effect, influencing Europe, China, and other regions, indirectly impacting India," he said on the sidelines of an interactive session with MCCL. He highlighted the significant slowdown in China's

economy, noting its "irrational" capacity-building approach despite reduced capacity utilisation.

"China's overcapacity, coupled with its slowing economy, has exacerbated global uncertainty and risk aversion, and may further affect India's growth trajectory," he added.

Despite these challenges,

Virmani remained optimistic about India's long-term prospects. "If India sustains 6 per cent growth for the next 25 years, it is well-placed to become an upper-middle-income or even a high-income country, coming close to China," he said.

Addressing the uneven distribution of investments across various states, Virmani said the NITI Aayog is working on benchmarks and indices to help states improve their investment climate, including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows.

"Currently, only a few states attract the majority of investments. The Modi Government recognises the crucial role of states and aims to provide actionable insights for others to catch up," he said. International institutions estimate GDP growth of India at 6.4-6.5 per cent.

IMF downgrades Pakistan's GDP growth outlook for 2025 to 3%

ISLAMABAD, Jan 18 (PTI)

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised cash-strapped Pakistan's economic outlook, downgrading its projected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for 2025 to 3 per cent, down from 3.2 per cent forecasted just three months ago, according to a media report on Saturday. The adjustment comes amid a broader global economic assessment presented in the IMF's "World Economic Outlook

Update: Global Growth – Divergent and Uncertain", "The Express Tribune" newspaper reported.

The IMF's revised projections also indicate that Pakistan's GDP growth will remain at 4% in 2026. However, the latest downgrade reflects ongoing economic challenges in the country, although the IMF did not provide specific reasons for the revision.

This latest revision mirrors the forecast made by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) last

month, which also adjusted Pakistan's growth forecast to 3% for the fiscal year 2024-25, up from a previously projected 2.8 per cent.

Both institutions have cited challenges faced by Pakistan's economy but have maintained a cautiously optimistic outlook for the medium-term, the report said. Globally, the IMF forecasts a global growth rate of 3.3 per cent for both 2025 and 2026, slightly below historical average of 3.7 per cent.

ISRO carries out demo of restarting Vikas liquid engine



BENGALURU, Jan 18 (PTI)

THE Indian Space Research Organisation has successfully carried out a demonstration of restarting its Vikas liquid engine at a test facility at Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri, the space agency said on Saturday.

The space agency said the Vikas engine is the workhorse that powers the liquid stages of its launch

vehicles. This test on January 17 marks a milestone in the development of technologies for recovery of stages, leading to reusability in future launch vehicles, according to an ISRO statement.

A series of tests are being carried out to validate the restarting of the engine under different conditions.

“In this test, the engine was fired for 60 seconds after which it was shut-off for a period of 120 seconds followed by restart and firing for seven seconds duration. All engine parameters during the test were normal and as expected,” the ISRO said.

Lack of jobs, unsettled borders are issues India has to fix for Viksit Bharat: Army V-C

SURAT, Jan 18 (PTI)

LACK of adequate employment opportunities, unsettled borders, and its position in the human development index are some of the weaknesses India needs to address to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, Vice Chief of the Army Staff Lt General N S Raja Subramani has said.

Speaking on the topic of "National Security and Bharat @ 2047" at Surat LitFest 2025 on Friday, Lieutenant General Subramani said the India of 2047 should have integrated its response mechanism, resolved its internal problems in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast, as well as left-wing extremism (LWE) to ensure social and com-



Vice Chief of the Army Staff
Lt General N S Raja Subramani
addressing Surat LitFest 2025.

munal harmony.

"Our strengths are our geographical location, youth, stable economic growth, and service sectors — Pharma and IT — which are progressing. What are our weaknesses? First, environmental change; second, our manufacturing sector is not strong; third, we do not have that many

employment opportunities. Our border, whether with China or Pakistan, is not yet developed. We need to improve the human development index," he said.

Lieutenant General Subramani said, "It is our responsibility to work on the internal conflicts in the society, reduce tensions, and move forward towards development. Only then will internal security also improve."

He said that by 2047, India's response mechanism should be integrated, and internal problems would have to be solved.

Issues related to J&K, Manipur, Nepal, and the LWE would have to be resolved so that there is social and communal harmony and India becomes developed by 2047, he said.