

Israel tanks, troops briefly raid Gaza for 'next combat stage'

Amid Calls To Delay, Bibi Says Invasion Imminent: ' Hamas Will Pay The Price'

REUTERS
Israel said its tanks and ground forces had made a big push into Gaza overnight to attack Hamas targets as PM Benjamin Netanyahu said it was still preparing for a ground invasion that could be one of several. "We brace for a ground incursion. I won't detail when, how or how much. I also won't specify the set of considerations we weigh," Netanyahu said. "When we enter Gaza, we'll make Hamas pay the price for its attack."

The US and other countries are urging Israel to delay a full invasion; Gaza is reeling from almost three weeks of Israeli bombing triggered by a mass killings spree in southern Israel by Iranian-backed Hamas, which runs the besieged enclave. Other Iranian-backed groups have since attacked Israel and US forces elsewhere in the region; Western leaders fear that a ground invasion with a high death toll among Palestinian civilians, who have already been killed in large numbers by Israeli air strikes, co-



BATTLEFIELD PREP: A soldier installs an Israeli flag on a tank during a military drill. During an overnight raid, the military said, it had hit multiple targets and 'operated to prepare the battlefield', without offering details

uld spark a wider war.

US President Joe Biden held a call with Netanyahu, discussing "ongoing efforts to release" of Americans believed held hostage by militants in Gaza, the White House said overnight. Israel said there were 224 hostages. Hamas has threatened to kill some of those it holds, who include many foreign passport holders, but has freed four since Friday.

"The president reiterated that Israel has every right and responsibility to defend its citizens from terrorism and to do so in a manner consistent with international humanitarian law," the WH statement said.

Israeli army radio said the military had overnight staged its biggest incursion into northern Gaza in the current war against Hamas, which Israel has vowed to eliminate. The

military later released video on X showing armoured vehicles crossing the highly fortified barrier from Israel and blowing up buildings "in preparation for the next stages of combat". "Tanks and infantry struck numerous terrorist cells, infrastructure and anti-tank missile launch posts," it said.

Hamas did not comment directly on the Israeli report but said its armed wing had struck an Israeli helicopter east of Bureij. The Israeli military said it was "not aware of this".

Benny Gantz, a retired general and a member of Israel's war Cabinet, said any possible ground offensive would be only "one stage in a long-term process that includes security, political and social aspects that will take years." "The campaign will soon ramp up with greater force," he added.

Israel also said it had also carried out around 250 airstrikes across Gaza in the last 24 hours, targeting tunnel shafts, rocket launchers and other militant infrastructure. REUTERS

India keeping close watch on Chinese warships in region

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Indian Navy is keeping close tabs on three Chinese warships, a submarine and a research vessel in the Indian Ocean Region, amid the rapidly-expanding collusiveness between China and Pakistan in the maritime domain as well.

The Chinese and Pakistan navies are slated to conduct the "Sea Guardians" joint maritime exercise in the northern Arabian Sea in November. A Chinese anti-piracy escort force (APEF) of a destroyer, a frigate and a tanker in the Persian Gulf region have been joined by a Song-class diesel-electric submarine along with a support vessel for the forthcoming exercise, sources said.

"The 44th Chinese APEF in the Gulf of Aden is being replaced by the 45th, which entered the IOR earlier this month. The submarine has come for the exercise. The In-



Chinese research ship Shi Yan 6 seen berthed at Colombo harbor

dia Navy has kept track of their movements right from the Malacca Strait to the Persian Gulf," a defence establishment source told TOI.

A dual-purpose Chinese survey and research vessel, Shi Yan-6, also docked at Colombo on Wednesday despite concerns being raised by India. In August, Chinese warship Hai Yang 24 Hao, with a crew of 140, had docked there.

India in the past has conveyed its strong objections to

Sri Lanka over allowing Chinese naval and spy vessels to come to its ports. The docking of Chinese research and space-tracking vessel Yuan Wang-5 at Hambantota in August last year had, in fact, led to a major diplomatic wrangle between India and Sri Lanka.

The Indian Navy, on its part, keeps track of the Chinese vessels using its fleet of P-81 long-range maritime patrol aircraft and surface ships as well as two MQ-9B Sea Guardian drones (variants of the iconic armed Predator drones) leased from the US.

Chinese spy vessels, packed with large antennae, advanced sensors and electronic equipment, undertake snooping, monitor satellite launches and track trajectories of ballistic missiles test-fired by India in the IOR. The survey vessels also map oceanographic and other data useful for navigation and submarine operations, as reported by TOI earlier.

GI Janes to guard 35 booths in Red zone

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Raipur: As many as 35 polling stations in Maoist-hit Bastar division will be guarded solely by women commandos of Bastar Fighters during the first phase of assembly polls in Chhattisgarh on November 7. One booth will be under the watch of transgender cops.

In six of the seven districts of Bastar division, women voters outnumber men. There are 10.4 lakh women voters compared to 9.9 lakh men.

This is the first time all-women teams are guarding these many booths. In

Bastar, at least, the transgender-guarded booth is a first.

In 2021, 451 women from the interior areas of Bastar were recruited in the Bastar



The women commandos, who have undergone 18 months of basic and jungle warfare training, have been raised from the local tribal population

Fighters' special force, raised from the local tribal population. The aim was also to encourage the native population to work for peace and progress of the region that has been hit by the insurgency for decades.

After 18 months of basic and jungle warfare training, these young women are carrying out operations in their

respective district units.

When the local administration began chalking out security deployment plans for the assembly elections, the women commandos are learnt to have volunteered for it, expressing their desire to make a "positive impact" in their first-ever election duty. Senior police officials decided to hand over the se-

curity responsibility of 35 polling stations to them.

Following SOP, the authorities are yet to disclose details of where the women Bastar Fighters will be deployed. Bastar Range IG P Sundarraaj told TOI that it's an important step towards providing "more meaningful and inclusive opportunities to women police personnel in challenging tasks".

"We have decided to hand over security arrangements of 35 polling stations exclusively to women commandos and one polling booth to transgender police personnel who have been recently inducted," Sundarraaj said, adding: "We are hopeful that it will send a positive message in society with regard to gender sensitization and gender equality."

Transgenders will guard the Pakhanjore polling booth in Kanker district, close to the Maharashtra border.



**BATTLEGROUND
CHHATTISGARH**

EX-NAVY OFFICERS: THE QATAR CONUNDRUM

What's the case

The former officers are | Captain Navtej Singh Gill, Captain Birendra Kumar Verma, Captain Saurabh Vasisht, Commander Amit Nagpal, Commander Purnendu Tiwari, Commander Sugunakar Pakala, Commander Sanjeev Gupta and Sailor Ragesh.

➤ Qatari authorities never gave any explanation for their arrest. Charges were also framed against two Qatari nationals, including Khamis al-Ajmi, the CEO of Dahra Global. The CEO of the company was released before the FIFA World Cup.

➤ The officers were working with Qatari firm Al Dahra Global Technologies to oversee induction of high-tech Italian-made small stealth submarines U212. The firm provided technical consultancy services to Qatari armed forces.

➤ Qatar had signed an MoU in 2020 with Italian shipbuilding firm Fincantieri SpA to build submarines as part of a larger project for construction of a naval base.

➤ With no details of the reasons of arrest of the 8 marines, some media reports accused Pakistan of "muddying the waters" with misleading information to stoke tensions.



Timeline

8 INDIAN NAVY VETERANS ARRESTED IN DOHA IN AUGUST, 2022

Oct 3, 2022 | First consular access granted to eight ex-navymen

March 15, 2023 | Last bail plea rejected

March 25, 2023 | Charges filed against the 8

May 30, 2023 | Dahra Global closed operations

Oct 1, 2023 | India's ambassador in Doha and deputy head of mission met the officers



What Happened on Thursday

➤ The Court of First Instance in Doha sentenced the eight former Navy officers to death

➤ Indian Government's Response

➤ India expressed "deep shock" at the verdict, and said it was "exploring all legal options". India said it will engage with the Qatari government in the case. MEA said it was awaiting release of detailed judgment from Qatari authorities

What Next

➤ 'The Court of First Instance' held four hearings. The families have also filed a mercy plea with the Emir of Qatar, who is known to grant pardons during Ramzan and Eid.

➤ The matter has been taken up by the government at various official and political levels, said government sources. "But just like GOI cannot release a foreigner under trial in India, other countries also have their own judicial processes," said a source.



Qatar Judicial System

The Criminal Courts rule over all crimes under its jurisdictions. The "Shari'a" courts have exclusive jurisdiction in connection with all family law matters



The courts of justice are divided into the following main categories

1 The Criminal Court which comprises the Lower Criminal Court and the Higher Criminal Court

2 The Civil Court which comprises the Lower Civil Court and the Higher Civil Court and also contains the Civil Department and Administrative Department

3 The Court of Appeal which contains three divisions: Criminal, Civil and Administrative; and

4 The Court of Cassation which contains four divisions Criminal, Civil, Administrative and Constitutional

The Lower Criminal Court hears and decides on cases of minor offences and misdemeanours. The Higher Criminal Court hears and decides on all cases of major crimes as well as appeals filed on sentences issued by the lower criminal court.

The Court of Appeal is responsible for deciding the appeals filed against the sentences issued by the Higher Criminal, Civil Courts, and Administrative and Labour Courts

The Court of Cassation is the highest court in the Qatari judicial system. It is responsible for deciding on the appeals filed against the judgment issued from the Court of Appeal

New trends emerging in air warfare: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, Oct 26 (IANS)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh pointed out that new trends have emerged in the field of air warfare and there is a need to analyse and learn from them to strengthen the defence preparedness.

He exhorted the Indian Air Force (IAF) to focus on strengthening the air defence systems, use of drones and making headway in the field of aerospace to protect India's air domain.

Rajnath said this in the two-day Air Force Commanders' Conference, which started in Delhi on Thursday.

During the session, the Defence Minister was briefed on the operational preparedness of the IAF by Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, Chief of the Air Staff.

In his address to the Commanders, Rajnath Singh emphasised on the need to



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt, Defence Secretary Girdhar Aramane, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari and commanders during the Indian Air Force Commanders' Conference in New Delhi on Thursday. (PTI)

enhance operational preparedness and highlighted the

importance of joint planning and execution of operations by

the three services.

He urged the IAF com-

manders to examine the rapidly changing global geo-political situation and assess them in the Indian context.

"There are new challenges emanating from the global security scenario. We must always be ready to deal with these challenges," the Defence Minister said.

Rajnath Singh praised the stellar role played by the IAF during the recent Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions in Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and other flood affected areas.

He also congratulated the IAF for successfully organising the Air Force Day Parade and Air Display at Prayagraj, which was well appreciated by the people.

Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt and Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan were among those present on the occasion.

The Ministry of Defence said that the conference, which is held bi-annually, involves discussions on charting IAF's way ahead, given the current geo-political environment and technological imperatives.

Eminent national security experts and accomplished personalities from various fields are invited to present their views during the conference, the defence ministry official added.

The commanders will hold wide-ranging deliberations on the IAF's plans for the future with an aim to bolster its combat capabilities, sources said.

They are especially expected to hold extensive deliberations on use of new technologies.

The conference, which is held bi-annually, involves discussions on charting the IAF's way ahead, given the current geo-political environment and technological imperatives.

In a dig at China, EAM asks SCO members to respect sovereignty

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Backing efforts to boost trade through robust connectivity and infrastructure in the SCO region, foreign minister S Jaishankar said such initiatives should respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries and that the Global South should not be saddled with unviable debt arising from opaque initiatives.

The minister said the recently launched India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) could become "prosperity enablers".

In an apparent dig at China, he also said the SCO should work together to promote stability and prosperity in the region by strictly adhering to the principles of international law, respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other and encouraging economic cooperation. The minister was speaking at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) heads of government meeting in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) in which China was represented by Premier Li Qiang.

"In this context, the centrality of the interests of Central Asian states plays a key role. India is keen to partner with the member states for sustainable, mutually beneficial



Jaishankar during the SCO heads of government meet in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on Thursday

and financially viable solutions," he said.

"India shares deep civilisational ties with the people of this region. The continuous movement of goods, ideas and people traversing the region has left indelible imprints on our customs, traditions, language and cuisine. These historical relationships should now create a template for greater economic cooperation," added Jaishankar.

Jaishankar highlighted that India is among the top 10 exporters in the world by value and its total trade with SCO members has shown robust growth, especially with Russia.

"It has grown in the last year by 20%, moving from \$140 billion to about \$170 billion. This has the potential to increase manifold," he said.

LINE OF NO CONTROL

SANDEEP ADHWARYU

UN chief Guterres doubles down on Hamas remarks

outraged Israel, he had said it was important to “recognise the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum” as the Palestinians have been “subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation.”

Guterres said on Wednesday it was “necessary to set the record straight, especially out of respect for the victims and their families.”

“I spoke of the grievances of the Palestinian people. And in doing so, I also clearly stated, and I quote: ‘But the grievances of the Palestinian people cannot justify the appalling attacks by Hamas.’”

Assam invokes 58-yr-old rule to bar staffers' 2nd marriage

Penalty For Violation Includes Compulsory Retirement

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Guwahati: Assam has followed up its crackdown on child marriage and decision to bring a law to ban polygamy with a circular reminding its four lakh-strong workforce of a service rule instituted 58 years ago that bars someone from marrying a second time without the government's consent as long as the first spouse is alive.

Without mentioning Muslims, the circular states that the rule is applicable even to men permitted by personal law to have a bigamous marriage.

The October 20 office memorandum issued by Nijraj Verma, additional chief



Getty Images

For the proposed polygamy law, a three-member panel has been constituted to build the framework

secretary of the personnel department, cites Rule 26 of The Assam Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1965, which treats any bigamous marriage without the govern-

ment's clearance as "misconduct", irrespective of what traditional law allows.

The circular states that violation of the rule would invite strict penalties, includ-

ing compulsory retirement alongside legal proceedings.

The BJP-led state government has repeatedly struck down on child marriage since February, with thousands of arrests statewide. Early this month, police arrested 1,039 people in a fresh drive targeting the marriage of underage girls, in most cases against their will.

For the proposed polygamy law, a three-member panel has been constituted to build the framework. A committee headed by a retired HC judge to look into the legal nuances has already cleared the proposal, saying that Assam only needs to get the President's assent, instead of the governor's.