

Israel & Hamas to start 4-day truce today: Qatar mediators

13 Israeli Women & Child Hostages To Be Freed First

Gaza/Jerusalem: Israel and Palestinian Islamist group Hamas will start a four-day truce on Friday morning with a first group of 13 Israeli women and child hostages released later that day, mediators in Qatar said. The agreement — the first in a brutal, near seven-week-old war — would begin at 7 am local time and involve a comprehensive ceasefire in north and south Gaza, Qatar's foreign ministry said.

Additional aid would start flowing into Gaza and the first hostages including elderly women would be freed at 4 pm, with the total number rising to 50 over the four days, ministry spokesperson Majed Al-Ansari said in the Qatari capital Doha. It was expected Palestinians would be released from Israeli jail, he told reporters. "We all hope that this truce will lead to a chance to start a wider work to achieve a permanent truce."

Hamas — which had been expected to declare a truce a day earlier on Thursday only for negotiations to drag on — confirmed on its Telegram channel that all hostilities from its forces would cease. Israel had received an initial list of hostages to be freed from the Gaza Strip and was in touch with families, the Israeli PM's



Israeli tanks operate in Gaza City amid the ongoing ground operation

Israel questions Al-Shifa director

The director of Al Shifa Hospital in the Gaza Strip, Dr Muhammad Abu Salamiyah was being questioned on Thursday over evidence the Israeli military said showed the facility had been used as a command and control centre for Hamas. Palestinian health minister Mai Al-Kayla said the arrests showed Israel was flouting international humanitarian law. **REUTERS**

office said in a statement that stopped short of confirming a truce had been agreed.

Qatar said an operations room in Doha would monitor the truce and the release of hostages, and had direct lines of communication with Israel,

Hezbollah fires back at Israeli military

The militant Hezbollah group fired more than 50 rockets at military posts in northern Israel Thursday, a day after an Israeli air strike on a home in southern Lebanon killed five of the group's senior fighters.

Hezbollah said it fired 48 Katyusha rockets at an Israeli army base in Beit Zeitim, about 10km from the border. It struck tanks and locations where troops were taking positions. **AP**

the Hamas political office in Doha and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Egypt — also involved in mediation — is receiving lists of hostages and prisoners that are expected to be released, Diaa Rashwan, the head

More videos of tunnels under Al-Shifa released

The Israeli military sought on Wednesday to bolster its assertions that Hamas uses tunnels beneath Gaza's largest hospital, releasing a series of videos it said showed "dozens of metres of a tunnel system" beneath the Al-Shifa Hospital. The videos show at least two toilets, a small alcove with a sink and a room with exposed wiring. Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, chief spokesman for the Israeli military, says in the video the room, and an electrical panel in another part of the tunnel, are connected to electricity sourced through the hospital. In the video, he also shows a room that he called a "hideout," with two cots and a wall-mounted AC unit he says is connected to an engine outside a hospital building. In another video, he enters a home he says is near Al-Shifa's complex. Inside the house, which has a chalkboard with English writing on it, he shows an entrance of a tunnel that he says links to tunnels under Shifa. **NYT**

of Egypt's state information service, said in a statement.

"While this is a hopeful moment, our work is not yet done. We will continue working to secure the release of all hostages out of Gaza," a US state department official said. **REUTERS**

Trapped workers just 10-13m away, but snag halts drilling

Mountain Has Its Own Ideas, Says Tunnelling Expert

Gaurav Talwar & Abhyudaya Kotnala

Piyal Bhattacharjee



'We were hoping to see the workers yesterday, again this morning and then this afternoon. But it was not to be,' said expert Arnold Dix Thursday

ne is mounted," the sources said, adding that drilling is likely to start only after the platform is completely stabilised.

Sources familiar with the topography of the area said the obstructions encountered in drilling were happening since a metal frame came cras-

hing down with the collapse of the tunnel roof on Diwali and got buried under the debris.

Commenting on the hitch, Arnold Dix, president of International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association, who has been engaged in the operation, was quoted by

NDRF men, specialists in dramatic operation

Thursday witnessed one of the most dramatic stages of the rescue operation: It needed NDRF men to squeeze into a 3 ft-wide pipe, one by one, gas cutter in hand, to neutralise a metal obstruction the drilling machine had hit. Despite gasping for breath and dehydrated due to flames from the gas-cutter, three NDRF men kept at it. Two specialists joined in and after two excruciating hours, cleared the passage. **P 20**

PTI as saying, "We were hoping to see the workers this time yesterday, then we were hoping to see them this morning and then this afternoon. But, it looks like the mountain has different ideas."

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Dehradun/Silkyara: The operation to evacuate the 41 workers trapped in the Silkyara tunnel for the last 12 days was temporarily halted Thursday after the auger drilling machine encountered another snag, barely 10 to 13 metres away from the spot where the workers are trapped.

Sources told **TOI** that the platform on which the auger machine has been mounted got destabilised after developing some cracks. "Technical teams have been working non-stop to stabilise the 25-tonne platform on which the machi-

Nirmala stresses on building awareness among people to curb cyber fraud

NEW DELHI, Nov 23 (PTI)

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said there was a need to build awareness among people on cyber frauds and take the reins of technology in our hands to stop scamsters from gaming the system. Speaking at the 'DATE with Tech' event, the Minister said to stop cyberfrauds, where people are duped by way of a phone call or SMS, the Government periodically reviews public sector banks, and regulator RBI reviews its own systems. Insurance companies also review their systems.

"We are constantly doing what is required.... Unless awareness, unless we are able to build that alertness in the mind of people that I should not go by anything that is said on my phone is built, citizens are at risk," Sitharaman said. She said at the micro level there is concern about people getting random calls putting them in a situation where they are getting trapped and as a result ending up losing money.

"Those people who game the system probably are one notch ahead of us in terms of using and misusing technology. On that, there is a lot of work required. It is a never-ending



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with Trescon Founder and Chairman Mohammed Saleem, Trescon Group CEO Naveen Bharadwaj and BJP MP Tejasvi Surya during the inauguration of the Digital Acceleration and Transformation Expo (DATE), in New Delhi on Thursday. (PTI)

game because technology is such an animal that keeps moving and racing much ahead of you. You have to be sure that you got the reins in your hand," Sitharaman said.

The Minister said large institutions, systematically sensitive institutions should have enough technology and teams adequately trained to firewall on an everyday basis, and keep checking whether the firewall is up to the job or not.

"On the other hand, we have concerns about people calling

you and asking you to transfer money and bringing some legitimacy in the conversation by knowing some details about you and you tend to believe that it could be a genuine thing," she said.

The Government institutions, banks and insurance companies are trying to build awareness saying you please don't trust any caller unless you have your own ways of establishing that it is indeed the right person who is talking to you, she said.

India set to kick off 3 mega def projects worth ₹1.4L cr

Aircraft Carrier, 97 Tejas Jets, 156 Prachand Copters On List

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New Delhi: India is now set to give preliminary approval to three mega indigenous projects to manufacture another aircraft carrier, 97 more Tejas fighters and 156 Prachand light combat helicopters, which together will be worth around Rs 1.4 lakh crore.

The Rajnath Singh-led defence acquisitions council is likely to take up the 'acceptance of necessity' (AoN) — the first step in the procurement process — for the three crucial projects at a meeting slated on November 30, sources told TOI on Thursday.

Once the AoNs are accorded, the tendering and commercial negotiations will take place before the three deals are submitted to the Cabinet committee on security for the final nod.

All these projects, which will take several years to be



The defence acquisitions council is likely to take the first step in the procurement process at a meeting on November 30, sources said

executed, are critical for strengthening India's operational military preparedness in the backdrop of China's expanding multi-domain warfare capabilities.

The 97 Tejas Mark-1A fighters, at a cost of around Rs 55,000 crore, will add to the 83 such jets already ordered under the Rs 46,898 crore contract inked with Hindustan Aeronautics in 2021.

These 180 Tejas jets are critical for IAF to boost the

number of its fighter squadrons, which is down to just 31 when at least 42 are required to tackle China and Pakistan. The first 83 Mark-1A jets are slated for delivery in the February 2024-February 2028 timeframe.

It will take 8-10 years for the second indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC-2), in turn, to be built at the Cochin Shipyard for around Rs 40,000 crore as a "repeat order" of the 44,000-tonne INS

Vikrant or IAC-1.

INS Vikrant was commissioned in September 2022, after being built for around Rs 20,000 crore, but will be fully combat-ready only by mid-2024. The Navy also has the older Russian-origin carrier INS Vikramaditya, the refurbished Admiral Gorshkov inducted in November 2013 under a \$2.33 billion deal with Russia.

The Navy currently has only 40 of the 45 MiG-29K jets, inducted from Russia for another \$2 billion, to operate from carriers. The twin-engine deck-based fighter being developed by DRDO is likely to take at least a decade to become fully operational.

The 156 Prachand helicopters (90 for Army, 66 IAF), capable of offensive operations in high-altitude areas like Siachen Glacier and eastern Ladakh, in turn, will cost around Rs 45,000 crore.

Top LeT commander among two terrorists killed

Rajouri ENCOUNTER

RAJOURI/JAMMU, Nov 23 (PTI)

TWO terrorists, including a top Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) commander trained in Afghanistan, were killed in a gunfight with security forces on Thursday in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, officials said.

On Wednesday, four Army personnel, including two captains, were killed and two others injured in the operation against the terrorists in the Dharmsal belt's Bajimaal area.

The officials said firing was halted in the night and the area was put under cordon. Firing resumed on Thursday morning, and two terrorist were killed, they said and added that the operation is in its final phase.



Security personnel stand guard during an encounter with terrorists, at Baji Maal area of Rajouri district on Thursday. (PTI)

Earlier in the day, a defence spokesman said in the firing, a Pakistani terrorist has been killed. Later, officials said another terrorist has been elim-

inated. The area was cordoned off and more security personnel were deployed in the night to ensure the terrorists do not

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Wilders heading for massive win in Netherlands in shock for Europe

THE HAGUE, Nov 23 (AP)

THE far-Right, anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders was headed for a massive parliamentary election victory on Wednesday in one of the biggest political upsets in Dutch politics since World War II, and one that is bound to send shockwaves through Europe.

That puts him in line to lead talks to form a new ruling coalition and possibly become the country's first hard-Right Prime Minister at a time of political upheaval through much of the continent. The exit poll published by national broadcaster NOS said that Wilders' Party for Freedom won 35 seats in the 150-seat lower house of Parliament, more than double the 17 he won at the last election. Final official results were only expected on Thursday.

"I had to pinch my arm," a jubilant Wilders said.

Wilders' election programme includes

calls for a referendum on the Netherlands leaving the European Union, a total halt to accepting asylum-seekers and migrant pushbacks at Dutch borders.

It also advocates the "de-Islamisation" of the Netherlands, although he has been milder about Islam during this election campaign than in the past.

"Voters said, 'We are sick of it. Sick to our stomachs,'" he said, adding he was now on a mission to end the "asylum tsunami," referring to the migration issue that came to dominate his campaign.

"The Dutch will be No 1 again," Wilders added. "The people must get their nation back." "But the lawmaker, who has in the past been labelled a Dutch version of Donald Trump, first would have to form a coalition Government before he can take the reins of power. That will be tough as mainstream parties are reluctant to join forces with him and his party, but the size of his victory strengthens his hand in any negotiations.

MoU on joint R&D in Defence Tech inked

NEW DELHI, Nov 23 (PTI)

A MEMORANDUM of Understanding between the Headquarters, Integrated Defence Staff and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) was signed here on Thursday for technical collaboration, joint Research and Development (R&D) in the field of defence technology, the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

The MoU was signed by Lt



N Kalaiselvi and Lt General JP Mathew during the signing of MoU in New Delhi on Thursday. (PTI)

General J P Mathew, Chief of

Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC), Ministry of Defence (MoD) and N Kalaiselvi, Director General, CSIR & Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science & Technology (MoST).

The MoU between the HQ IDS and CSIR aims to provide an umbrella framework for collaborative interaction between CSIR Labs, HQ IDS and Armed Forces.

DELAY Israel-Hamas truce deal pushed to today

DEIR AL-BALAH (Gaza Strip), Nov 23 (AP)

AN AGREEMENT for a four-day cease-fire in Gaza and the release of dozens of hostages held by militants and Palestinians imprisoned by Israel appeared to have hit a last-minute snag.

A senior Israeli official said it would not take effect until Friday, a day later than originally announced.

The diplomatic breakthrough promised some relief for the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza who have endured weeks of Israeli bombardment, as well as families in Israel fearful for the fate of their loved ones taken captive during Hamas' October 7 attack that triggered the war.

Over 13,000 have died in Gaza, say officials

DEIR AL-BALAH (Gaza Strip), Nov 23 (AP)

THE director of the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza says it has resumed its detailed count of casualties from the Israel-Hamas war, and has documented more than 13,000 deaths.

Medhat Abbas confirmed the resumption to 'The Associated Press' on Thursday.

The Health Ministry had stopped updating its figures on November 11 after the breakdown of access and communication in northern Gaza, where Israeli ground troops are battling Palestinian militants. The latest count is based on updated figures from hospitals in the south and November 11 figures from the northern hospitals. The real toll is likely higher.

The Health Ministry says another 6,000 people have been reported missing, and are feared buried under the rubble.

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, announced the delay late Wednesday, without providing

a reason. Negotiators were still "working to create the appropriate conditions" for the
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