



Indian Navy personnel conduct a rescue op after

Barbados Flagged Bulk Carrier MV True Confidence reported an incident of fire, in the Gulf of Aden. (PTI)

INDIAN WARSHIP RESCUES CREW OF DRONE-HIT VESSEL IN GULF OF ADEN

NEW DELHI, Mar 7 (PTI)

INDIAN warship INS Kolkata has rescued 21 crew members, including one Indian national, after their Barbados-flagged cargo vessel was hit by a missile in the Gulf of Aden, a Navy spokesperson said on Thursday.

The crew members had abandoned bulk carrier MV True Confidence after it caught fire following the attack on Wednesday. INS Kolkata, deployed for maritime security operations in the Gulf of Aden, arrived at the scene of action at 4.45 pm and rescued 21 crew members, including one Indian national, from a life raft using its integral helicopter and boats, Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said.

Critical medical aid was provided to the injured crew by the ship's medical team, he said. The rescued crew, including the critically injured personnel, have been evacuated to Djibouti by INS Kolkata. The Indian Navy warship swiftly responded to the maritime incident in Gulf of Aden, Madhwal said.

The Barbados-flagged vessel was reportedly hit by a drone approximately 55 nm south west of Aden resulting in the fire on board and critical injuries to some of the crew members forcing the crew to abandon the ship, he said.

Indian Navy has proved a sure saviour of distressed ships across ownerships and nationalities in the Indian Ocean Region

Truce talks between Israel & Hamas hang fire with both trading blame

No Progress On Sticking Points Ahead Of Ramzan

Cairo: Hamas said its delegation had left Cairo on Thursday amid ongoing negotiations on a ceasefire accord in Gaza that mediators hope to achieve before the start of Ramzan early next week.

After four days of talks mediated by Qatar and Egypt to secure a 40-day ceasefire ahead of the Muslim fasting month there is still no sign of progress on key sticking points, with both sides blaming the other. "Hamas' delegation left Cairo this morning for consultation with the leadership of the movement, with negotiations and efforts continuing to stop the aggression, return the displaced and bring in relief aid to our people," a Hamas statement said. Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said Israel had been "thwarting" efforts to conclude a ceasefire deal. Abu Zuhri said Israel was rejecting Hamas's demands to end its offensive in the enclave, withdraw its forces, and ensure freedom of entry for aid and the return of displaced people.

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his intention on Thursday of pressing on with the military campaign in Gaza. "Needless to say, Israel will do whatever it takes to release our hostages. We've made very, very clear and this has been reiterated by the US that, unfortunately, it is Hamas who is the stumbling block right now by not telling us who is alive and who they have in their custody," Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said on Thursday. US President Joe Biden said earlier this week



A photo released by Indian Navy shows the rescue operation of crew members of a Barbados-flagged bulk carrier in Gulf of Aden

Indian Navy evacuates all crew from stricken vessel to Djibouti

London: India's Navy evacuated all 20 crew from a stricken vessel in Red Sea Thursday, after a Houthi attack killed three seafarers in the first civilian fatalities from the Yemeni group's campaign against the key shipping route. The Iran-aligned militants fired a missile at the Barbados-flagged, Greek-operated True Confidence on Wednesday about 50 nautical miles off the southern Yemeni port of Aden, setting it ablaze.

In a statement, the owners and manager said all 20 crew and three armed guards on board were taken to hospital in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa by an Indian warship. Two of the dead were Filipino nationals, while the third was Viet-

namese, the owners and managers said, expressing condolences to families. Two other Filipinos were severely injured.

Vietnam on Thursday condemned the attack, and said one of the Vietnamese crew died while the remaining three nationals were in good health.

Images released by Indian Navy showed a helicopter winching crew members from a small life raft in choppy seas and taking them to a naval ship. Some wounded were shown lying in the bottom of a navy lifeboat sent to assist. They were carried on stretchers onto the ship and were shown later with heavily bandaged limbs as they were evacuated to the Djibouti hospital. REUTERS

of the hostages it still holds following the Oct 7 attack. Palestinian prisoners held in Israel would also be released. REUTERS

Bibi: Will push on with Gaza offensive, including in Rafah

Israel will push on with its offensive against Hamas, including into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, despite growing international pressure to stop, PM Netanyahu said Thursday. "There is international pressure and it's growing, but particularly when the international pressure rises, we must close ranks, we need to stand together against the attempts to stop the war," he said. About 1.5 million people are estimated to be crammed into Rafah. Netanyahu also said Israel must push back against a "calculated attempt" to blame it for Hamas' crimes. "Whoever tells us not to act in Rafah is telling us to lose the war and that will not happen," the PM said. REUTERS

Biden to announce plan to build Gaza aid port: Officials

President Joe Biden will announce a plan in his State of the Union address for the US military to help establish a temporary port on the Gaza coast to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into the beleaguered territory, said senior administration officials. The officials said the operation will not require that US troops be on the ground to build the pier, intended to allow more shipments of essential items. They did not provide details about how the pier would be built, but said it would likely take weeks for it to be operational. AP

Armed Forces ready to give befitting reply if anyone casts evil eye on India, says Rajnath

NEW DELHI, Mar 7 (PTI)

THE Armed Forces are well equipped, capable and ready to give a befitting reply if anyone casts an evil eye on India, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday against the backdrop of the nearly four-year border row with China in eastern Ladakh and concerns over Chinese military forays into the Indian Ocean.

Singh emphasised that the country's defence system has been "induced with a new energy" by the Government in line with people's vision and it has resulted in India emerging as a powerful nation on the global stage with a strong and self-reliant military. In an address at a defence summit hosted by the NDTV, he also said that India's defence apparatus is today stronger than ever as the Modi Government has been focusing on bolstering it with the "sentiment of Indianness".

He termed 'perspective' as the major difference between the current and the previous dispensations, stating that the present Government ardently

believes in the capabilities of the people of India, while those in power earlier were somewhat sceptical about their potential. "Today, our forces possess a strong willpower due to a powerful leadership at the centre. We are working continuously towards keeping the morale of the soldiers high," Singh said. "They are equipped, capable and ready to give a befitting reply to anyone who casts an evil eye on India," he said.

The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-and-half-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

Singh described promoting 'Aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in defence manufacturing as the biggest change brought about by the Government, saying it is giving a new shape to India's defence sector. "The annual defence production, which was around Rs 40,000 crore in 2014, has now crossed a record Rs 1.10 lakh crore," he said.



CCS gives go-ahead to indigenous 5th-gen stealth fighter project

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New Delhi: India will finally develop its own ambitious fifth-generation stealth fighter, the swing-role advanced medium combat aircraft (AMCA) capable of achieving supersonic cruise speeds with relative ease, at an initial cost of Rs 15,000 crore.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved the long-pending full-scale engineering development of five prototypes of indigenous twin-engine AMCA, along with a structural test specimen, extensive flight testing and certification, by Aeronautical Development Agency of DRDO, sources said.

CCS also cleared procurement of 34 more Dhruv twin-engine advanced light helicopters Mark-III, 25 for the Army and nine for Coast Guard, from HAL for over Rs



PTI

FUTURE FIGHTERS

8,000 crore. They will add to the around 300 such 5.5-tonne class choppers already inducted by the armed forces.

The first AMCA prototype, as per projected timelines, will "roll out" in four years, and make its maiden flight another year after that. "It will take 9-10 years for the actual production of AMCA by HAL to begin after all the development and flight-testing of prototypes. So, IAF will begin inducting them

after 2035," a source told TOI.

Advanced stealth features in the 25-tonne AMCA will range from "serpentine air-intake" and an internal bay for smart weapons to radar absorbing materials and conformal antenna. It will be able to achieve supersonic cruise speeds without the use of afterburners as well as have data fusion and multi-sensor integration with AESA (active electronically scanned array) radars.

IAF plans to induct seven squadrons (126 jets) of the expensive AMCA. The first two squadrons will be powered by GE-F414 engines in the 98 kilonewton thrust class to be jointly developed with US. The next five AMCA Mark-2 squadrons, in turn, will have 110 Kilonewton engines. Along with GE, the French Safran and British Rolls-Royce are in the fray for this.

Neutralisation of Art 370 has given azadi to Kashmiris: PM

Says New Era Of Equal Rights, Opportunities Beckons Valley

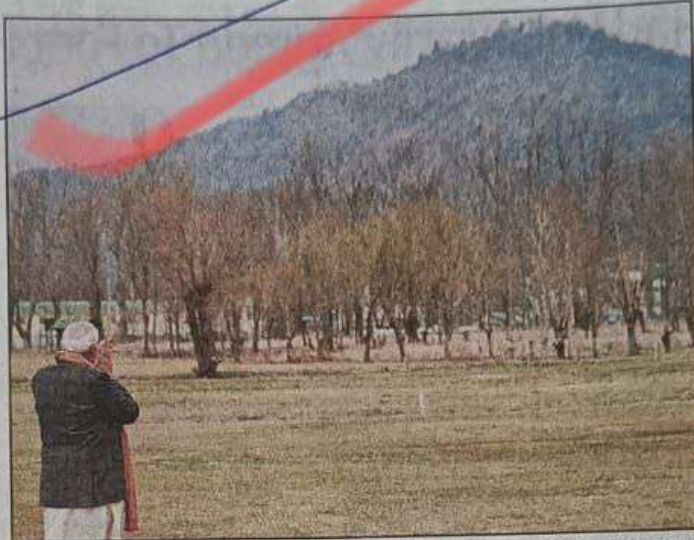
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Asserting that Article 370 favoured a select group of politicians and their families, Modi said, "Kashmir has suffered the consequences of dynastic politics since Independence. The truth is now evident, and people cannot be deceived any longer. A new promising era lies ahead for Kashmir, marked by equal opportunities, dignity, and rights for all. Unlike the past, the locals now reap the benefits of various laws and pro-poor schemes initiated by the Centre concurrently."

Criticising dynastic politics that "plagued the region" — an oblique reference to PDP and National Conference, the two main parties rooted in J&K — he called neutralisation of Article 370 a "pro-poor, pro-development and pro-women" initiative that has given "azadi (freedom)" to the people of the Valley. "Congress misguided the nation about Article 370, but who did it benefit," he asked.

He said J&K is "breathing freely" post-Article 370 and pledged accelerated progress over the next five years. "Modi will not leave any stone unturned to repay this debt of affection. This is Modi's sanz (Kashmiri word for guarantee)," he told the huge gathering at the stadium.

Extending his early greet-



PM Modi at Shankaracharya Hill. The PM made an unplanned detour to the site, home to a hilltop temple believed to have been visited by Adi Shankaracharya, during his journey to Srinagar on Thursday

ings for Ramzan, he said the Centre is committed to usher in transformative changes on the developmental front in the Union Territory over the next five years and that nobody can derail "J&K's train of success, peace and prosperity".

Earlier, Modi distributed appointment letters to almost 1,000 recently recruited govt employees and engaged with beneficiaries of several central schemes, including women achievers, farmers, and entrepreneurs.

The PM lauded the successful hosting of the G20 event in J&K and said it broke the popular notion that the region is not a preferred tourist destination. "In 2023 alone, more than two crore tourists visited this region. Amarnath Yatra witnessed the highest number of pilgrims in the last decade, and Vaishno Devi shrine is seeing record-breaking footfalls. The influx of foreign tourists has surged two-and-a-half times compared to previous years. Notably, prominent

stars, celebrities, and international guests now make it a point to visit Kashmir, exploring its valleys, creating videos and reels that go viral."

Advocating 'Wed in India' campaign to encourage citizens to opt for domestic destinations such as Kashmir for weddings to support local tourism, the PM stressed that bolstering local spending will not only strengthen the economy but also foster employment opportunities for people in the Valley. "You cannot come, see and go back. You should spend 5% to 10% on shopping. I have also purchased from here," Modi said.

The projects dedicated by the PM to the nation included agriculture development programme worth about Rs 5,000 crore and multiple projects related to the tourism sector worth more than Rs 1,400 crore under 'Swadesh Darshan' and 'PRASHAD' scheme including the project for integrated development of Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar.

Modi shares selfie with 'entrepreneur friend Nazim'

Narendra Modi-X



PM Modi with Nazim during the 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Jammu & Kashmir' event on Thursday

Srinagar: Nazim Nazir was buzzing like his busy bees with gratitude, thanking people and fielding calls after Narendra Modi granted the Pulwama beekeeper's wish for a selfie together, a moment the PM later shared on social media, referring to him as "my friend Nazim", reports **Saleem Pandit**.

Modi engaged with three budding entrepreneurs from Kashmir during the "Viksit Bharat Viksit J&K" programme at Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar on Thursday, underscoring the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in the region.

Nazim shared his journey in beekeeping and honey extraction. Starting with just two honey bee boxes in his attic when he was in class 10, Nazim received support from J&K's agriculture department to expand his business. Today, he owns a dozen bee boxes & supplies organic honey to markets across the country.

'India sees Japan as a natural partner'

TOKYO, Mar 7 (PTI)

INDIA sees Japan as a "natural partner" in its journey, development and transformation, and in its quest for peace, prosperity and stability in the strategic Indo-Pacific region, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday as he held "very productive" talks with his Japanese counterpart Kamikawa Yoko.

In his opening remarks at the 16th India-Japan Foreign Ministers Strategic Dialogue in Tokyo, Jaishankar also said that 2023 was a landmark year in the bilateral relationship.

"We see Japan as a natural partner in India's journey, development and transfor-



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar gives a gift to his Japanese counterpart Yoko Kamikawa before their meeting at Iikura Guest House in Tokyo on Thursday. (AP/PTI)

mation, and in its quest for peace, prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific," said Jaishankar, who is here for the second leg of his four-day visit to South Korea and Japan.

India and Japan are members of QUAD - a four-member strategic security dialogue that also includes the US and Australia.

In a joint press statement along with Japanese counterpart Yoko, Jaishankar said their talks provided strategic guidance to their teams to realise the vision of the India-Japan Special Strategic Global Partnership and the expectations that the top leaders of the two countries have of this partnership.

Stating that this round of the dialogue has been "very productive", Jaishankar said the two sides have made good progress in their defence and security relations.

"Today, just as we're meeting here in Tokyo, the Indian Army is conducting joint exercises with the Japanese Self-Defence Forces in Rajasthan. The three branches of our military and Coast Guard are productively engaged with the Japanese counterparts," he said.

Jaishankar said the two major Indo-Pacific nations have an abiding stake in the peace, security and prosperity of the region and are ready to play a responsible role.