

# Israel readies troops on Lebanon border

## Def Min Says Can Take Lebanon Back To Stone Age, But Working To Reach Deal

Israel's PM and prez toured northern Israel's border and met with military commanders there Wednesday, amid escalating tensions with Hezbollah forces in Lebanon and mounting concerns from world leaders that a wider war could break out. PM Benjamin Netanyahu posted a video online during his visit of him saying Israeli forces were "determined and committed to the mission of achieving victory, and no less."

The tours by Israeli officials along the border with Lebanon came as Israel's defence minister, Yoav Gallant, concluded four days of meetings in Washington with senior Biden administration officials, who repeatedly stressed the need for a diplomatic solution to tensions with Hezbollah. The Iran-backed militia has been targeting Israel since the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack set off a war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Tensions have flared in recent weeks.

"Hezbollah's provocations



A damaged Israeli military position targeted by Hezbollah fighters is seen on the top of Mount Hermon in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights

threaten to drag the Israeli and Lebanese people into a war that they do not want," Lloyd Austin, the US secretary of defence, said in a meeting with Gallant on Tuesday. Austin added that "such a war would be a catastrophe for Lebanon, and it would be devastating for innocent Israeli and Lebanese civilians."

Gallant, in that same meeting, said Israel was working to

"achieve an agreement". But he added that Israel was "determined to establish security" in the north and change "the reality on the ground." "We must also discuss readiness for every possible scenario," he said, adding that his country could "take Lebanon back to the Stone Age, but we don't want to do it".

Israeli news media reported Wednesday that more troops

were being sent to the northern border region. On Sunday, Netanyahu said in a TV interview that the war in Gaza was entering a new, less intense phase, allowing the military to turn more attention to Lebanon.

On Wednesday, Herzl Halevi, the Israeli military's chief of staff, also visited the northern border with Lebanon and held a "situational assessment" with local commanders. Israeli troops in the north are training for what the military described as "extreme scenarios". The Israeli military said Wednesday its fighter jets struck a Hezbollah military structure and targeted several other sites in southern Lebanon.

Last week, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said the Lebanese militia did not want a wider conflict but was prepared for war. "We have prepared ourselves for the most difficult days. If war is imposed, the resistance will fight without constraints, rules or limits." NYT & AFP

## Israel military tells Palestinians to go south as it storms Gaza City locality

Israel stormed a neighbourhood in Gaza City on Thursday, ordering Palestinians to move south as the tanks rolled in and bombing the southern city of Rafah in what it says are the final stages of an operation against Hamas militants there.

Residents of the Shejaia neighbourhood in Gaza City said they were taken by surprise by the sound of tanks approaching and firing in the early afternoon, with drones also attacking after overnight bombing of the city, which Israel had combed early in the war.

Later on Thursday, the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said that the Israeli military strikes had killed at least seven people in Shejaia so far. More casualties are feared to be under the rubble, it said. REUTERS

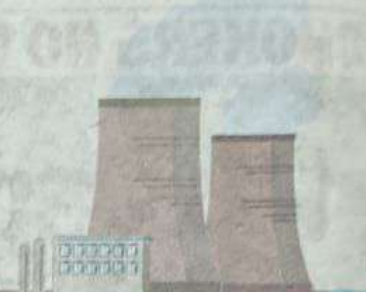
# Why water shortage can leave economy parched

Water, Lots Of It, Is Essential To India's Economic And Industrial Growth. But Shortages Can Hit Key Sectors And Spark A Larger Meltdown Unless Managed Quickly, Says A Report By Moody's

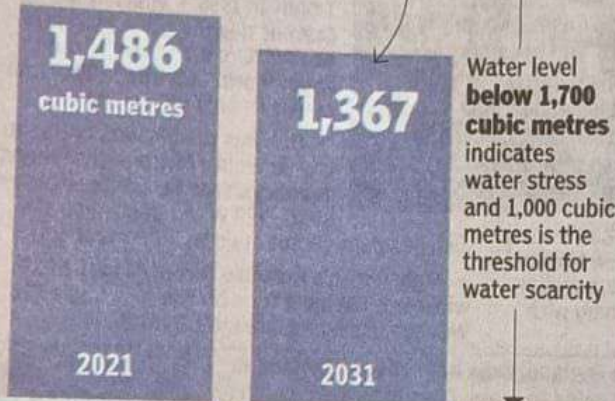
## 1 Less And Less Of It Is Available

Rapid economic growth, industrialisation and urbanisation will combine to **bring down per capita water availability in India**. It's a situation that's only set to worsen due to extreme climate-related events, like the unrelenting heatwaves sweeping India this summer. And India is a big consumer of water and its population, already largest in the world, is set to hit **1.5 billion by 2030 from 1.4 billion in 2023**.

Per capita water availability is dropping



More than 70% of rainfall in India occurs in the June-Sept period. But monsoon is under pressure, thanks to climate change. Monsoon rainfall in 2023 was 6% lower than the average for 1971-2020

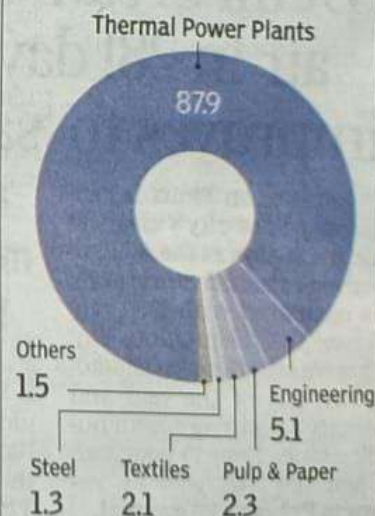


## 3 Coal, Steel Face Greatest Risk

Moody's says that **thermal power plants** and steel manufacturers **"are the most vulnerable to water stress"** given their heavy dependence on water. Thus, water crises can severely hamper their operations and impact margins.

Heavy reliance on coal-based power means thermal coal power plants are "by far the largest consumers of water" in India. For steel-makers, on the other hand, reliance on water-intensive techniques of production pose a significant threat.

### Water use by industry, % of total use



## 2 But Biz Needs More And More

Unprecedented shortfall in rain in August last year led to severe shortages and hit sugar production in Maharashtra and Karnataka, "pushing up retail sugar prices to a six-year high", says Moody's.

Drop in water supply can severely disrupt farm production, triggering a rise in food prices and hitting incomes for the more than 40% of Indian workers engaged in agriculture. And that's not even mentioning the industrial sector. Moody's says that India

is particularly exposed to water-related risks and **"also has the poorest access to basic services, including water, among G20 economies"**.

Compared with the G20 median, India has space for both industrial and urban growth, but that will affect **"already-scarce water resources"**. While demand for irrigation will come down, industry and energy will see big jumps in water requirement with drinking water needs also set to increase.

### Industry, energy will need more water

(demand in billion cubic metres as % of total demand)



To improve water availability, the Union govt is investing in water infrastructure and looking to up renewable energy generation to reduce reliance on water-intensive coal-power generation. Also, "heavy industrial consumers of water are looking to improve the efficiency of their water use", Moody's says.

# India strongly dismisses 'baseless' remarks on Kashmir by Pak in UNSC

UNITED NATIONS, June 27 (PTI)

INDIA has strongly dismissed and condemned the "baseless" remarks on Kashmir made by a Pakistani diplomat during a UN Security Council debate on children and armed conflict, calling it another habitual attempt to divert attention from the "grave violations" against children that continue unabated in Pakistan.

"Let me respond briefly in the interest of time to remarks, which were obviously politically motivated and unfounded, made by one representative against my country. I categorically dismiss and condemn these baseless remarks with the contempt they deserve," Ambassador R Ravindra, Chargé d'Affaires and Deputy Permanent

Representative of India to the UN, said Wednesday.

He made the remarks while delivering a statement at the UN Security Council's open debate on Children and Armed Conflict. Ravindra said this is "nothing but another habitual attempt to divert attention from the grave violations against children that continue unabated in his own country," as highlighted in this year's report by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on children and armed conflict.

"As far as Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh are concerned they were, are and always will be an integral and inalienable part of India, irrespective of what this particular representative or his country believes or wishes," Ravindra said.

# Budget '24 will roll out historic steps, speed up reforms: Prez

## May Focus On Jobs, Prices, Try To Spur Demand

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Raising expectations of major announcements, President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said the first Budget of PM Narendra Modi's third term will have several historic steps, going beyond economic and social decisions. "This Budget will be an effective document of govt's far-reaching policies and futuristic vision... The pace of reforms will be further accelerated in tune with the aspirations of people of India for rapid development," the President said in her address to the joint sitting of Parliament.

Expectations of a reform-oriented Budget have been building up since Modi returned to office for a third consecuti-

### 'HIGH-LEVEL PROBE INTO EXAM ROW'

Cases of paper leaks and irregularities in exams being probed at a high level, need to rise above partisan politics. Sanctity, transparency must in govt recruitments and exams

Emergency was the biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack on Constitution. Entire country plunged into chaos

EVM has passed every test, from SC to people's court

People of India have given a clear and stable mandate to



Modi govt for a third time... Opposing policies different from disrupting Parliament proceedings...

Several records of voting broken in Kashmir; Valley gave fitting reply to India's enemies

Govt working for lasting peace in Northeast... working for gradual removal of Afspa

Govt has started granting citizenship...under CAA, wish for a better future for such people

— President Droupadi Murmu

Rashtrapati Ji's address...was comprehensive and presented a roadmap of progress and good governance

— PM Modi

ve term, equalling Nehru's record, with govt expected to address several concerns flagged during the elections, including job creation and inflation through a push for manufacturing, tax concessions to spur demand and provide more money to households.

The PM has also spoken about the Budget being a key element of the govt's 2047 development agenda which will include a 100-day programme leading to action points and targets up to 2030.

► Continued on P 23

### Birla's reference to Emergency avoidable: Rahul

Om Birla's condemnation of Emergency in his acceptance speech on election to the office of Speaker was "political" and "avoidable", leader of opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi told him on Thursday.

Govt could have made such a reference, but it was not expected from the Speaker, he said after he led a delegation of INDIA bloc MPs for a courtesy call on Birla. Cong-

### ► In Parliament, oppn set to go all out on NEET, P 13

ress termed the reference to the 1975 measure as a "travesty of parliamentary traditions". In a letter to Birla, Congress general secretary K C Venugopal called it a "grave matter impacting the very credibility of the institution of Parliament". P 12

# Bolivia coup bid fails after short-lived military assault on presidential palace

Top Gen Held, Claims He Staged Takeover On Prez's Order To Help Raise His Popularity



Bolivia's now-dismissed army chief Gen Juan Jose Zuniga (C) is arrested in La Paz; military police block entry to Plaza Murillo where gov't palace located

A top general and allied members of the military tried to storm the presidential palace in Bolivia Wednesday, before quickly retreating in an apparently failed attempt at a coup. Hours later, the general was taken into custody on live TV. Video on Bolivian TV showed security forces in riot gear occupying the main square in the administrative capital, La Paz, a camouflaged military vehicle ramming a palace door and soldiers trying to make their way into the building. Then, just as quickly as they had appeared, the general, Juan Jose Zuniga disappeared, and his supporters in the armed forces pulled back and were replaced by police officers supporting the country's

democratically elected president, Luis Arce. Arce ventured onto the plaza after calling on Bolivians "to organise and mobilise against the coup and in favour of democracy." "Long live the Bolivian people!" he shouted in a televised address. "Long live democracy!"

In all, the attempted afternoon incursion into the palace lasted just three hours. As time wore on, it became clear that Zuniga's plan had little support. Just before his arrest, Zuniga claimed, without providing evidence, that Arce had asked him to stage the coup attempt. "The prez told me," Zuniga said as TV cameras rolled, "the situation is really messed up, this week is going to be critical — so it's necessary to prepare

something that will raise my popularity." Moments later, the police whisked the general away in a truck. Afterward, a key minister in Arce's gov't, Eduardo del Castillo, responded to the accusation by saying that Zuniga had "lost all credibility." Del Castillo added that nine people had suffered firearm injuries amid the chaos.

The office of Bolivia's attorney general said it had opened an investigation, adding that it would seek "the maximum punishment" for those responsible. Local news outlets previously reported that Zuniga was dismissed from his position this week, which some believed to be related to remarks he made about ex-prez Evo Morales, a mentor of Arce.

The coup bid came at a tense moment for Bolivia, a landlocked nation of 12 million people in South America. Bolivia's economy is struggling, and Arce has been accused of moves his critics call undemocratic, including the detention of opposition figure Luis Fernando Camacho and ex-prez Jeanine Anez ahead of 2025 elections.

Bolivia, a deeply polarised country, has had 190 coups throughout its 200 years of history. And much of the discontent among members of the military, analysts say, stems from the feeling that they end up defending the established order, only to be punished politically, or with jail time, for standing by that order once a new gov't takes over. NYT

# China expels 2 ex-def ministers from CPC over graft allegations

## Insiders Allege Widespread Purge Of Officers For 'Conspiring' With Outside Forces Or Simply Being Insufficiently Loyal To Xi

**Beijing:** China has expelled two former defence ministers from the governing Communist Party over accusations of corruption that are likely to lead to sentences of life in prison. The defence ministry on Thursday said Li Shangfu had abused his authority to enrich himself by taking bribes in exchange for granting favours in violation of military and party discipline. Li's predecessor, Wei Fenghe, was also accused on similar charges.

Such charges have been levelled in the past against many military leaders under Prez Xi Jinping, who also heads the armed forces as chairman of the Central Military Commission and has made a crackdown on corruption a hallmark of his rule since taking power more than a decade ago.

Li is being investigated for corruption and bribery, the official Xinhua news agency reported Thursday. He was removed from office in Oct 2023 after disappearing from public view for almost two months.

Wei was placed under investigation in Sept and was suspected of "seriously violating political and organisational discipline by helping others gain improper benefits in per-



Wei Fenghe was placed under investigation in Sept and was suspected of 'violating discipline by helping others gain improper benefits for money and valuables'



Li Shangfu Li is being investigated for corruption and bribery. He was removed from office in Oct 2023 after disappearing from public view for almost two months

sonnel arrangements," Xinhua reported. He was found to have accepted a "huge amount of money and valuables in return, constituting the suspected crime of taking bribes," Xinhua said, adding that he had "lost his faith and loyalty and contaminated the political environment of the military, "bringing enormous damage to the Party's cause, the development of national defence and the armed forces, as well as the image of senior officials."

Both face prosecution under the justice system run by the People's Liberation Army, the military wing of the Communist Party.

Insiders have alleged a widespread purge of officers suspected of conspiring with outside forces or simply be-

ing insufficiently loyal to Xi.

In its statement, the ministry gave no details of the allegations against Li, other than saying that his alleged crimes were "exceptionally pernicious" and that they posed "an enormous danger".

Li spent most of his career as a specialist in the missile and procurement branches, and was under travel and financial sanctions from the US over the purchase of Russian military hardware at the time he dropped from view last Sept. That roughly coincided with the sudden disappearance of then-foreign minister Qin Gang and several leading officers in the rocket corps amid unproven allegations of misconduct. Li was replaced in Dec by Admiral Dong Jun. AP