

India and UAE launch 'Desert Cyclone' drill in Rajasthan

New Delhi: India on Tuesday kicked off a joint military exercise called 'Desert Cyclone' with the UAE at the Mahajan ranges in Rajasthan, in keeping with the ongoing thrust on stepping-up military ties with the Gulf countries.

The aim of the exercise, which will continue till January 15, is to enhance interoperability between the two armies in sub-conventional operations, including fighting in built-up areas, in desert and semi-desert terrain, an officer said.

The UAE contingent is being represented by troops from the Zayed First Brigade, while the Indian Army contingent is from the Mechanised Infantry TNN

India should deal with China on the basis of realism: EAM

NEW DELHI, Jan 2 (ANI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has reiterated that India should deal with China on the basis of realism and asserted that the relationship should be based on the three mutual understandings- respect, sensitivity, and interest.

In an interview with ANI, Jaishankar reassessed India's approach of engaging with China with realism in order to checkmate its aggressive measures, while also hitting out at the romanticism of the Nehruvian era with China. "I argue for dealing with China from a basis of realism -- that strain of realism, which I feel -- strains all the way from Sardar Patel to Narendra Modi -- that is the strain of realism which I feel should allow us to have a certain approach," said Jaishankar. The External Affairs Minister also lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his pragmatic approach on China.

"I would say that the Modi Government has been very much more and in conformity with a strain of realism, which originated from Sardar Patel," he said. Explaining the difference in the approach of India's first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel and first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal



S Jaishankar

Nehru, Jaishankar highlighted the difference of opinion among the two stalwarts.

"Even when it came, for example to the UN Security Council seat, it's not my case that we should have necessarily taken the seat, it's a different debate, but to say that we should first let China -- China's interest should come first, it's a very peculiar statement to make," said Jaishankar while dealing with the approach of Nehru and Sardar Patel's realism.

Early into Nehru's tenure, Sino-Indian relations were characterised by what was perceived as friendship and cordiality that covered both bilateral and regional and international issues however, India got a rude awakening when China launched a war in 1962 that gave decision makers in New Delhi a reality check on their China policy.

"It takes two hands to clap. I pose the issue in this manner if you look at the last 75 plus years of our foreign policy, they have a strain of realism about China and have a strain of idealism, romanticism, non-realism. It begins right from day one, there is a sharp difference of opinion -- how to respond to China between Nehru and Sardar Patel," said Jaishankar while responding to a question on whether the two nations will bury the hatchet in 2024.

Jaishankar also dwelt on the "Chindia policy" and said, "The alternative strain which starts from Nehru's China's first policy -- first let China take seat, then we will see for India. From China's first policy, it ends up as Chindia policy." "Chindia", an idea that projects the joint rise of China and India and was promoted by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh who called for constructive cooperation and competition between the Asian giants in 2014.

"You should ask the inventor of the term," said Jaishankar.

About the pivot India took on China, the Union Minister said, "I don't believe it's a pivot we have taken, we have tried to construct a relationship which is based, as I say on three mutuals, and the fact is, unless that

It was tied to Quad Summit: Jaishankar on Biden not travelling to India for R-Day

NEW DELHI, Jan 2 (ANI)

WITH US President Joe Biden not able to make it to India in late January due to "scheduling demands", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that the visit was tied to the proposed Quad Summit and indicated that the dates did not work with all partners.

In an interview with ANI, Jaishankar said that could not get "a landing zone" there and couldn't get "everything agreed by everybody".

"You know I think that was a different issue, because you know it was tied to Quad also and we couldn't get a landing zone there...we couldn't get everything agreed with every-

body. So, therefore it didn't work," Jaishankar said. He was asked if Biden could have come for the Republic Day parade and there could have been "Namaste Biden" event on the lines of the huge "Namaste Trump" event held in Ahmedabad to welcome the then US President Donald Trump during his visit to India in 2020. Sources had said earlier that Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) Summit, which was slated to be hosted by India in January, is now proposed to be held later in 2024. They had said that revised dates were under consideration as the current ones do not work with all the QUAD partners.

mutuality is recognised -- this relationship will find very difficult to progress. Today, part of our problem is exactly -- because in 2020 agreements were disregarded and the mutuality on which this whole relationship is predicated has not been followed -- we have the situation, we have. So, when you ask me, where will it go -- I would say, lot of it will depend on what is the Chinese policy," Jaishankar emphasised that the development of India-China relations is guided by three mutuals of respect, sensitivity, and interest. The Minister also spoke about the various mind games played by diplomats and politicians while dealing with other countries.

Truckers' protest leads to PANIC BUYING OF FUEL

NEW DELHI, Jan 2 (PTI)

PROTESTS were held in many States on the second day of the strike by some truckers' associations against stricter punishments in the new law on hit-and-run cases, even as the Government began talks on Tuesday with the agitating groups to end the stir that threatened to impact the supply of essentials and led to panic buying of fuel in several places.

Towards the evening, truck drivers in Maharashtra's Nashik district called off their strike after local authorities assured them of looking into their demands. However, Rajasthan saw some violence on Monday night as a mob burnt a police vehicle and pelted stones at security personnel, leaving three injured in Kekri district.

Some truck, bus and tanker operators began a three-day



Oil tanker and truck drivers during their protest in Mumbai on Tuesday. (PTI)

strike on Monday in several States to protest the "stringent punishments". Under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, set to replace the Indian Penal Code, drivers who cause serious road accidents due to negligent driving and run away without informing authorities face up to 10 years in prison or

a fine of Rs 7 lakh.

Referring to the apprehensions, a senior Government functionary said a driver who accidentally hits a person and subsequently informs the police or takes the victim to the nearest hospital will not be prosecuted under the stringent provision of the recently

enacted Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The Opposition Congress, meanwhile, came out in support of the truckers' protest, saying the misuse of the legislation can lead to an "extortionist network" and "organised corruption". Party chief Mallikarjun Kharge accused the Government of "penalising the poor" while stalling investment in the infrastructure sector.

On the second day of the strike, fuel pumps at many places in Himachal Pradesh turned away motorists, saying they had run out of stock as petrol and diesel were not being transported, while the Chandigarh administration ordered rationing of fuel to two- and four-wheelers.

There were massive queues at fuel stations across Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir as the strike hit supplies and people

went on a panic-buying spree. People rushed to petrol pumps in large numbers in some parts of Haryana as well as private bus operators and some auto-rickshaw unions joined the protest.

In Maharashtra, truck drivers have been staging protests at various places, including the capital Mumbai, Nagpur, Solapur, Dharashiv, Navi Mumbai, Palghar, Nagpur, Beed, Hingoli, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Nashik, Gadchiroli and Wardha. The movement of nearly five lakh vehicles in Madhya Pradesh was affected and many passengers were stranded as drivers did not operate the inter-city buses due to the strike. Industry officials said about 2,000 petrol pumps, mostly in western and northern India, have run out of fuel stocks as people resorted to panic buying over fears of stock shortage.

India's first all-girls sainik school comes up in Mathura

MATHURA, Jan 2 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday inaugurated the first all-girls sainik school at Vrindavan and termed it as a beacon of light for girls who aspire to join the Armed Forces and protect the motherland.

According to the Defence Ministry, Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School, the first all-girls sainik school with a strength of about 870 students, has been inaugurated under the initiative of establishing 100 new sainik schools in partnership with NGOs/private/State Government schools in all states/Union territories.

These are in addition to the existing 33 sainik schools already functioning under the erstwhile pattern, the Ministry



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh (2L) lights a lamp during inauguration of Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School at Vrindavan in Mathura on Monday. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath (L) also seen. (ANI)

said in a statement.

"Samvid Gurukulam Girls

Sainik School is a beacon of light for girls who aspire to join the

Armed forces and serve the motherland.

"Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government has given women their rightful place in the Armed Forces, which was neglected for years," the Defence Minister said on the occasion.

"They (girls) have the right to protect the nation just like their male counterparts. It was a golden moment in the history of women empowerment when we approved the admission of girls to sainik schools. Today, our women are not only flying fighter jets, they are also securing the borders," he said.

Speaking about the importance of Mathura, he said that the sages of India have considered the global society as one family.



Newly-inaugurated Samvid Gurukulam, Sainik School for girl students in Mathura on Monday. (PTI)

Heavy Russian missiles hit Ukraine's Kyiv, Kharkiv

KYIV (Ukraine), Jan 2 (AP)

UKRAINE'S two largest cities came under heavy Russian missile attacks on Tuesday, killing one person and injuring dozens. Oleh Syniehubov, the Governor of the Kharkiv region, said one person died and 41 were injured in Russian missile strikes that hit the centre of Kharkiv city and other areas. In Kyiv, the capital, five areas of the city were hit in the strikes and at least 12 people injured, according to mayor Vitali Klitschko.

The barrage of the cities continued Russia's escalated attacks on Ukraine in recent days that began on Friday with its largest single attack on

Ukraine since the war started, in which at least 41 civilians were killed. The following day, shelling of the Russian border city of Belgorod that Russian officials blamed on Ukraine killed more than two dozen people. Russia has struck back repeatedly since.

The attack on Belgorod was one of the deadliest to take place on Russian soil since Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine started more than 22 months ago.

Cities across western Russia regularly have come under drone attacks since May, although Ukrainian officials never acknowledge responsibility for strikes on Russian territory or the Crimean Peninsula.

Israel SC strikes down Netanyahu's judicial overhaul law

JERUSALEM, Jan 2 (AP)

ISRAEL'S Supreme Court struck down a key component of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's contentious judicial overhaul on Monday, delivering a landmark decision that could reopen the fissures in Israeli society that preceded the country's ongoing war against Hamas.

In Monday's decision, the court narrowly voted to overturn a law passed in July that prevents judges from striking down government decisions they deem "unreasonable". Opponents had argued that Netanyahu's efforts to remove the standard of reasonability opens the door to corruption and improper appointments of unqualified cronies to

important positions.

The planned overhaul sparked months of mass protests, threatened to trigger a constitutional crisis between the judicial and legislative branches of the Government, and rattled the cohesion of Israel's powerful military.

Those divisions were largely put aside after Hamas militants carried out a bloody cross-

border attack in southern Israel on October 7, triggering a war that has raged in Gaza for nearly three months. But Monday's court decision could reignite those tensions even while the country remains at war.

Justice Minister Yariv Levin, a Netanyahu ally and the architect of the overhaul, lambasted the court's decision, saying, it demonstrated "the opposite

of the spirit of unity required these days for the success of our soldiers on the front".

The ruling "will not discourage us", Levin said without indicating whether the government would try to revive his plan in the short term. "As the campaigns are continuing on different fronts, we will continue to act with restraint and responsibility," he said.

BRICS admits five new members; Putin hints at further expansion

NEW DELHI, Jan 2 (PTI)

THE BRICS bloc of top emerging economies, including India, Russia and China, has announced induction of five full members into it in an attempt to expand its strategic left against the backdrop of Western dominance in world affairs.

As Moscow assumed the presidency of BRICS, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday said the grouping has become a 10-nation body now with Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates joining it as new members, adding work on modalities to induct new categories of partner nations would start now.

In August, the top BRICS leaders at the grouping's sum-

mit in Johannesburg approved a proposal to admit six countries, including Argentina, into the bloc with effect from January 1.

However, Argentina's new President Javier Milei last week announced withdrawing his country from becoming a member of the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa).

"Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates joined BRICS as new full members which is a strong indication of the growing authority of the association and its role in international affairs," Putin said in an address.

The Russian President said BRICS is attracting an ever increasing number of supporters and like-minded countries that share its under-

lying principles such as sovereign equality, openness, consensus, aspiration to form a multi-polar international order and a fair global financial and trading system.

The grouping took shape in September 2006 and it originally comprised Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC). It was renamed as BRICS after South Africa was accepted as a full member in September 2010.

With Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as its members, BRICS represents a quarter of the global economy and it has been a major engine of global economic growth over the years.

In his remarks, the Russian President said about 30 more countries are prepared to join the multi-dimensional agenda of the BRICS.