

N Korea fires around 200 artillery rounds at border

Seoul: North Korea fired around 200 artillery rounds on Friday near a disputed maritime border with South Korea in another escalation of tension between the rivals and prompting the South to take “cor-



Kim Jong-un views the launch of a Hwasong-18 ICBM during what North Korea says is a drill in Dec

responding” action with live fire drills. North Korea said it conducted firing drills as a “natural response” to actions by South’s “military gangsters” in recent days. It threatened an “unprecedented strong

response” if Seoul continued to make provocative moves.

The exchange led residents of two remote South Korean islands on the western maritime frontier to evacuate to bomb shelters at the instruction of the South’s military, before it fired live rounds towards the disputed Northern Limit Line (NLL) border. The firing by North caused no civilian or military damage, South’s military said. “This is an act of provocation that escalates tension and threatens peace on the Korean peninsula,” South’s defence minister Shin Won-sik said.

North Korea’s army general staff said its defensive coastal units fired 192 rounds. The drills had no impact on South Korean islands as claimed by the South, its statement said. **REUTERS**

Via Reuters

Israel's post-war Gaza plan exposes divisions in govt

Defence Min Envisions Gaza Without Hamas & Palestinian Authority, And No Israeli Civilians; Finance Min Slams Plan

A new postwar plan floated by Israel's defence minister has laid bare the divisions in PM Benjamin Netanyahu's government over "the day after" fighting in Gaza ends. The proposal by defence minister Yoav Gallant, a moderate member of Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party, was widely seen as a trial balloon, but it showed the pressure the PM was facing as Washington and others press for a shift to a less intense phase of the war.

The Biden administration wants Israel to plan for "the day after", meaning how Gaza will be governed when fighting ends, though analysts say that to keep his far-right allies from leaving his governing coalition, Netanyahu has delayed any serious domestic discussion.

Gallant's proposal shared Thursday at a meeting of the security cabinet is predicated on the military defeat of Hamas. It calls for maintaining Israel's military control of Gaza's borders, while a "multinational task force" oversees reconstruction and economic development in the territory. Under his plan, Gazan Palestinians who don't have ties to Hamas would administer civilian affairs in the Gaza Strip, according to details of the cabinet meeting leaked to Israeli media. But there would be no role for the Palestinian Authority that runs the occupied West Bank, and there would be no resettlement of Israelis in Gaza.

Gallant's proposal appeared to be an effort to stake out middle ground. It rules out involvement of the Palestinian Authority, which exercises authority in parts of the West Bank, in administering Gaza after the war. The Biden administration has called for the authority to play a postwar role



An Israeli soldier visits a memorial of her family at the site of the Nova festival where people were killed and kidnapped during the Oct 7 attack by Hamas

Hezbollah vows to retaliate to killing in Beirut for Lebanon

The head of Hezbollah said on Friday Lebanon would be "exposed" to more Israeli operations if his Lebanese armed group did not respond to the killing of the deputy chief of Hamas on the outskirts of Beirut. Delivering a televised address for the second time in less than a week after nearly two months without doing so, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said the group "cannot be silent about a violation of this level". "This means that all of Lebanon will become exposed, all cities, villages, and figures will become exposed," he said. He also said if Israel managed to achieve its goals in Gaza, it would then turn to Lebanon. REUTERS

a path toward a two-state solution that would create a Palestinian state consisting of both Gaza and the West Bank, which many politicians on the Israeli right oppose. But the Gallant plan also rules out resettling Gaza with Israelis, an idea that far-right Israelis espouse. In recent days, Itamar Ben-Gvir, the

Iraq PM: Preparing to close down US-led coalition's mission

The Iraqi government is forming a committee to prepare the closing down of the US-led international coalition's mission in the country, PM Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's office said on Friday. The statement came a day after a US strike killed a militia leader in Baghdad, prompting anger among Iran-aligned groups. The US has 900 troops in Syria and 2,500 in Iraq on a mission it says aims to assist local forces trying to prevent a resurgence of Islamic State. Sudani has limited control over some Iran-backed factions, whose support he needed to win power a year ago and who now form a powerful bloc in his governing coalition. REUTERS

Bezalel Smotrich, the finance minister, have advanced the idea of encouraging Gazans to voluntarily emigrate to countries willing to grant them entry. The US had sharply rebuked the ministers' comments. In a Facebook post, Smotrich criticised Gallant's plan, suggesting it risked a repeat of the Hamas attacks, and reitera-

US and EU launch diplomatic drive as Israel strikes 100 Gaza targets

US secretary of state Antony Blinken and Europe's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, embarked on a new diplomatic effort on Friday to stop the spillover of the conflict in Gaza to the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Lebanon and Red Sea shipping lanes.

Their visits to West Asia take place almost three months of war that Palestinian officials say has killed 22,600 people. Israel, which says it has killed 8,000 militants since the deaths of 1,200 people in the Oct 7 Hamas attack, announced a more targeted approach on Thursday. But Gazans said Israeli planes and tanks had intensified attacks overnight. Some 162 people were killed in the past 24 hours, Palestinian health officials said. The Israeli military said it had struck over 100 targets in Gaza in the past 24 hours.

Blinken is due to visit the West Bank during a tour starting Friday in Türkiye. He will also visit Jordan, Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and make a stop in Greece. Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief, was due in Lebanon on Friday to discuss the Israeli-Lebanese border situation. REUTERS

ting his call for "voluntary emigration" of Gazans. The Israeli media described the Thursday meeting as stormy.

Netanyahu's governing coalition holds only a fragile majority, with 64 seats in the 120-seat parliament. With his popularity at a new low, Netanyahu must keep his coalition together in bid to stay in office. NYT



Ahead of Muizzu's China visit, Blinken dials Male

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Days before Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu departs for China, US secretary of state Antony Blinken spoke with Maldivian foreign minister Moosa Zameer and discussed the importance of defence cooperation, economic growth, combating the climate crisis, and democratic governance. As first reported by TOI on Monday,

Muizzu will travel to China next week, becoming the first democratically elected Maldives president to travel to China before visiting India. In an official announcement, Male said on Thursday that Muizzu will visit China from January 7 to 12.



According to the state department, Blinken reaffirmed the US' commitment to strengthening cooperation with Maldives, a key partner in a free, open, secure, and prosperous

Muizzu will travel to China next week, becoming the first Maldives president to do so before visiting India

Indo-Pacific region.

The Maldives said in its own readout discussions between Zameer and Blinken centred on a wide range of issues, including defence cooperation, economic development, climate change and adaptation, democratic governance, and

the rule of law. Blinken, while reiterating the importance of the partnership, expressed the US commitment to continue working with the Maldives on shared priorities. "Minister Zameer conveyed the readiness of President Muizzu's government to work together in this endeavour. Zameer also expressed his gratitude to the US government for its continued support to the Maldives and for the importance it attaches to enhancing the partnership further," it said.

India's GDP growth seen at 7.3% amid global slowdown

NSO Estimate For '23-24 Tops RBI's 7% Projection

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India's economy is estimated to grow by 7.3% in the current fiscal year ending March, powered by robust manufacturing, construction and mining sector expansion — a stellar performance against the backdrop of a slowing global economy

► **EDIT PG: How to read 7.3%**

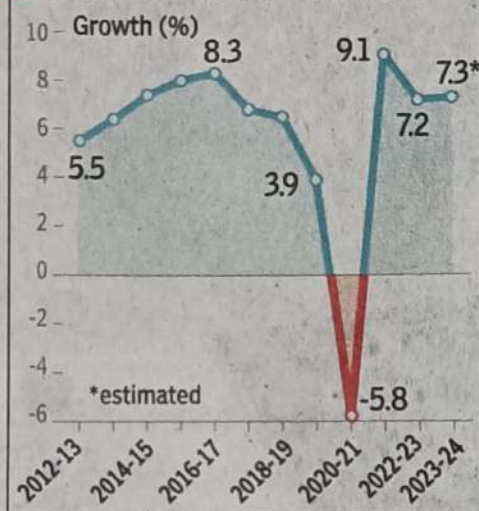
and geopolitical upheaval.

The first advance estimates released by National Statistical Office on Friday showed the economy is projected to perform better than RBI's projection of 7% for 2023-24 and higher than the earlier estimates of 6.5% growth.

The strong second-quarter

POWERED BY MFG, CONST & MINING

Annual GDP Growth Over Years



Key Drivers Of Growth

- Manufacturing estimated to grow by **6.5%**
- Construction seen expanding by **10.7%**
- Mining set to grow by **8.1%**
- Industry to grow **7.9%**

Other Agencies' Forecasts

Agency	Growth %
RBI	7
ADB	6.7
IMF	6.3
World Bank	6.3
OECD	6.3

Source: Mospi

► **GDP data calls for revisiting fiscal numbers, P 21**

ter performance of 7.6% had prompted several agencies to upgrade India's growth projections citing robust domestic demand. India continues to remain the fastest-growing major economy in the world as China's growth slows led by a raft of problems, including real estate sector woes.

The strong data comes ahead of the February 1 interim budget and before Lok Sabha elections due in May and is likely to bolster government's record of handling the economy against the backdrop of global turbulence.

► **Continued on P 21**

Navy pins hijacked ship off Somalia, rescues 21

15 Indians Part
Of Crew; Pirates
Flee Under Heat

Rajat.Pandit@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Striking a major blow at the very heart of piracy emanating from Gulf of Aden, Indian warship INS Chennai and its marine commandos thwarted the attempted hijack of a Liberia-flagged merchant vessel and rescued its 21 crew members, including 15 Indians, in the north Arabian Sea Friday evening.

Navy said five or six armed pirates, who boarded MV Lila Norfolk 460 nautical miles east of Eyl in Somalia Thursday evening, "probably abandoned" the merchant

TRACK, INTERCEPT & RESCUE IN 24 HRS

➤ MV Lila Norfolk (right) alerts UK Maritime Trade Operations that 5-6 armed pirates had boarded vessel Thursday evening off Somalia

➤ Navy deploys patrol aircraft, diverts warship INS Chennai to assist vessel

➤ Friday morning, aircraft establishes contact with crew huddled in ship's citadel, a secure space built for piracy situations



➤ Vessel kept under constant surveillance of patrol aircraft, copters and drones. Warship intercepts it at 3.15pm

➤ Marine commandos launched on rigid-hull inflatable boats. Rescue operation over in 2 hours

vessel after the "forceful warning" issued by Indian P-8I patrol aircraft through open channels and "interception" by the 7,500-tonne guided missile destroyer INS Chennai.

Pirates who do not have a ship's crew under control as hostages usually flee on

skiffs to their 'mother boat' on being confronted by a warship. Late Friday night, INS Chennai was helping restore power and propulsion of the vessel to ensure she could resume her voyage.

▶ **Related report, P 17**

सेना डाक सेवा कोर

सोम मंगल बुध बृहस्पति शुक्र शनि रवि
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जनवरी JANUARY

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पूर्ण अवकाश/Closed Holidays

- January 20 भारतीय विमान / Indian Air Day
- March 20 युवा दिवस / Youth Day
- April 11 ईद-उल-फ़ितर / Id-ul-Fitr
- April 21 भारतीय वायु सेना / Indian Air Force
- May 23 युवा दिवस / Youth Day
- June 17 ईद-उल-जुमा / Id-ul-Jumma
- July 17 जूलिय / July Day
- August 15 स्वतंत्रता दिवस / Independence Day
- September 10 गुरु रामदास / Gururamdas (Guru Ramdas Ji Maharaj)
- October 02 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- October 12 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- October 31 शिवरात्री (शिवरात्री) / Shivratri (Shivratri)
- November 15 युवा दिवस / Youth Day
- December 25 क्रिसमस / Christmas Day

2024

प्रतिबंधित अवकाश/Restricted Holidays

- January 01 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- January 13 शनिवार / Saturday
- January 14 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- January 15 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- January 17 युवा दिवस / Youth Day
- January 25 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- February 14 वी. एच. दिवस / V. H. Day
- February 19 शिवरात्री / Shivratri
- February 24 युवा दिवस / Youth Day
- March 06 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- March 08 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- March 24 शनिवार / Saturday
- March 25 शनिवार / Saturday
- March 31 ईद-उल-जुमा / Id-ul-Jumma
- April 05 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- April 09 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- April 13 शनिवार / Saturday
- April 14 शनिवार / Saturday
- April 17 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- May 08 युवा दिवस / Youth Day
- July 07 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- August 15 शनिवार / Saturday
- August 19 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- August 26 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- September 07 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- September 15 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- October 10 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- October 11 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- October 17 शनिवार / Saturday
- October 20 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- October 31 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- November 02 शनिवार / Saturday
- November 03 नया वर्ष / New Year Day
- November 07 अन्वेषण दिवस / Discovery Day
- November 24 युवा दिवस / Youth Day
- December 24 क्रिसमस / Christmas Day

सोम मंगल बुध बृहस्पति शुक्र शनि रवि
MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN
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US says Russia used missiles from North Korea in Ukraine

Pyongyang And Moscow Deny Any Arms Deals

Washington/Seoul: Russia recently used short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) sourced from North Korea to conduct multiple strikes against Ukraine, the White House said on Thursday, citing newly declassified intelligence.

National security spokesperson John Kirby told reporters the US will raise the development with the UNSC. According to UNSC resolutions, approved with Russian support, countries are banned from trading military equipment with North Korea. Kirby called North Korea's arms transfer to Russia a "significant and concerning escalation" and said the US would impose additional sanctions against those facilitating the arms deals. Moscow and Pyongyang have denied conducting arms deals, but vowed last year to de-



According to UNSC resolutions, approved with Russian support, countries are banned from trading military equipment with N Korea

pen military ties.

The use of the missiles drew condemnation from Britain, as well as South Korea, which had reported in November that North Korea may have supplied SRBMs to Russia as part of a larger arms deal.

The US' assertion was corroborated by Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak, who posted on X: "There is no longer any disguise...as part of its outright genocidal war, the Russian Federation for the first time struck at the territory of Ukraine with mis-

siles received from...North Korea." Podolyak added, "(Russia) is attacking Ukrainians with missiles received from a state where citizens are tortured in concentration camps for having an unregistered radio, talking to a tourist, watching TV shows."

Russia recently launched some of its most intense strikes on Ukraine since the war began. Kyiv on Tuesday said Russia had launched well over 300 attack drones and missiles of various kinds at cities across Ukraine since Friday.

While the White House would not say specifically what type of missiles Pyongyang had sent to Russia, Kirby said they had a range of about 900km and released a graphic that appeared to show KN-23 and KN-24 missiles. Such missiles are new, solid-propellant SRBMs that North Korea began testing in 2019, said Ankit Panda, of the US-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "This is the first known combat use of these N Korean missiles," he said. REUTERS