

# To deter West, Russia orders tactical nuke weapons drills

## Move Comes On Eve Of Putin's Inauguration To 5<sup>th</sup> Term As Prez

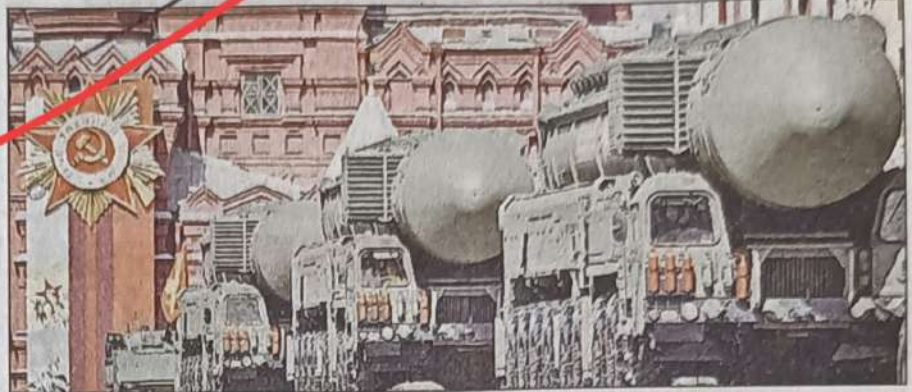
Russia said Monday it plans to hold drills simulating the use of battlefield nuclear weapons amid rising tensions following comments by senior Western officials about the possibility of deeper involvement in the war in Ukraine. The announcement came on the eve of Russian Prez Vladimir Putin's inauguration to a fifth term in office.

The drills are a response to "provocative statements and threats of certain Western officials regarding the Russian Federation," the defence ministry said in a statement. It was the first time Russia has publicly announced drills involving tactical nuclear weapons, although its strategic nuclear forces regularly hold exercises.

The Russian announcement was a warning to Ukraine's Western allies about becoming more deeply engaged in the war, where the Kremlin's forces have gained an upper hand amid Ukraine's shortage of manpower and weapons. Some of Ukraine's Western partners have previously expressed concern that conflict could spill beyond Ukraine into a war between Nato and Russia.

French Prez Emmanuel Macron repeated last week that he doesn't exclude sending troops to Ukraine, and UK foreign secretary David Cameron said Kyiv's forces will be able to use British long-range weapons to strike targets inside Russia.

The Kremlin branded those comments as dangerous, heightening tension between Russia and Nato. The war already



AFP/File photo

The Russian announcement was a warning to Ukraine's allies about becoming more deeply engaged in the 2-year-old war

## Russia warns UK of strike-back if Ukraine uses British weapons to hit its territory

Russia warned Britain on Monday that if British weapons were used by Ukraine to strike Russian territory then Moscow could hit back at British military installations and equipment both inside Ukraine and elsewhere. British ambassador Nigel Casey was called to the foreign ministry for a formal protest after foreign secretary David Cameron said last week that Ukraine had the right to use British weapons to strike Russia. Britain denied Casey had been summoned, saying that he had met Russian officials "for a diplomatic meeting". Russia's foreign ministry said the Cameron remarks recognised that Britain was now de facto a part of the conflict. REUTERS

## What are tactical nuclear weapons?

Unlike nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles that can destroy entire cities, tactical nuclear weapons for use against troops on the battlefield are less powerful and can have a yield as small as 1 kiloton. The US bomb dropped on Hiroshima during WWII was 15 kilotons. Such battlefield nuclear weapons — aerial bombs, warheads for short-range missiles or artillery munitions — can be very compact. Their small size allows them to be discreetly carried on a truck or plane. Unlike strategic weapons, which have been subject to arms control agreements between Russia and the US, tactical weapons never have been limited by any such pacts, and Russia hasn't released their numbers or other specifics related to them. AP

ady has placed significant strain on relations between Moscow and the West. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday that Macron's recent

statement and other remarks by British and US officials had prompted the nuclear drills. "It's a new round of escalation," Peskov said. AP

## Maldives urges Indians to 'be part' of its tourism

**Dubai:** With the number of Indian tourists visiting Maldives dwindling amidst strained bilateral ties, the nation's tourism minister on Monday urged Indians to contribute to the country's economy which is dependent on tourism.

In an interview with PTI, Maldivian tourism minister Ibrahim Faisal emphasised on

the historical relations between his country and India.

"We have a history. Our newly elected government also wants to work together (with India). We always promote peace and a friendly environment. Our people and the government will give a warm welcome to Indian arrivals. As the tourism minis-

ter, I want to tell Indians to please be a part of Maldives' tourism. Our economy depends on tourism," he said.

A full-blown backlash was directed at Maldives following derogatory remarks against India and PM Modi on social media by three Maldivian officials after Modi posted photos and videos of pristine Laksh-

adweep Islands on India's west coast 6 on his X handle.

Scores of Indians, including celebrities, cancelled their reservations and dropped plans to visit Maldives. The tourism arrival statistics reflected how from being a top visitor country, India's position went down from topmost to sixth position after Jan. ൧൩

## CEASEFIRE

# Hamas accepts Egyptian-Qatari proposal

JERUSALEM, May 6 (AP)

HAMAS announced on Monday that it has accepted an Egyptian-Qatari proposal for a ceasefire to halt the seven-month-long war with Israel in Gaza, hours after Israel ordered about 1,00,000 Palestinians to begin evacuating from the southern city of Rafah, signalling that a long-promised ground invasion there could be imminent.

There was no immediate comment from Israel on the deal, and details of the proposal have not yet been released.

In recent days, Egyptian and Hamas officials have said that the ceasefire would take place in a series of stages during which Hamas would release hostages it is holding in exchange for Israeli troop pullbacks from Gaza.

It is not clear whether the deal will meet Hamas' key demand of

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**The truce proposal was accepted after Israel orders Rafah evacuation ahead of attack**  
**There was no immediate comment from Israel on the ceasefire deal**

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bringing about an end to the war and complete Israeli withdrawal.

Hamas said, in a statement its top leader, Ismail Haniyeh, had delivered the news in a phone call with Qatar's Prime Minister and Egypt's Intelligence Minister. After the release of the statement, Palestinians erupted in cheers in the sprawling tent camps around Rafah, hoping the deal meant an Israeli attack had been averted.

Israel's closest allies, including the United States, have repeatedly said that Israel shouldn't attack Rafah. The looming operation has raised global alarm over the fate of around 1.4 million

Palestinians sheltering there. Aid agencies have warned that an offensive will worsen Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe and bring a surge of more civilian deaths in an Israeli campaign that in nearly seven months has killed 34,000 people and devastated the territory.

US President Joe Biden spoke on Monday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and reiterated US concerns about an invasion of Rafah. Biden said that a ceasefire with Hamas is the best way to protect the lives of Israeli hostages held in Gaza, a National Security Council

spokesperson said on condition of anonymity to discuss the call before an official White House statement was released.

Hamas and key mediator Qatar said that invading Rafah will derail efforts by international mediators to broker a ceasefire.

Days earlier, Hamas had been discussing a US-backed proposal that reportedly raised the possibility of an end to the war and a pullout of Israeli troops in return for the release of all hostages held by the group. Israeli officials have rejected that trade-off, vowing to continue their campaign until Hamas is destroyed.

Netanyahu said on Monday that seizing Rafah, which Israel says is the last significant Hamas stronghold in Gaza, was vital to ensuring the militants can't rebuild their military capabilities and repeat the Oct. 7 attack on Israel that triggered the war.

# ISRO developing semi-cryogenic engine working on liquid oxygen kerosene

BENGALURU, May 7 (PTI)

ISRO on Monday said it is developing a 2,000 kN (kilonewton) thrust semi-cryogenic engine working on a Liquid Oxygen (LOX) Kerosene propellant combination for enhancing the payload capability of Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3) and for future launch vehicles.

Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) is the lead centre for the development of semi-cryogenic propulsion systems with the support of other launch vehicle centres of ISRO.

The successful ignition of a semi-cryo pre-burner is a major

accomplishment of ISRO in the development of semi-cryogenic propulsion systems, the space agency said.

The assembly and testing of the propulsion modules were done at the ISRO propulsion complex (IPRC), Mahendragiri.

As part of the engine development, a pre-burner ignition test article, which is a full complement of the engine power head system excluding the turbopumps, is realised, it said, adding, the first ignition trial was conducted successfully on May 2, at semi cryo integrated engine test facility (SIET) at IPRC, Mahendragiri.

Smooth and sustained igni-

tion of the pre-burner is demonstrated, which is vital for the starting of the semi-cryogenic engine, it added.

According to ISRO, semi-cryogenic engine ignition is achieved using a start fuel ampule which uses a combination of Triethyle Aluminate and Triethyle Boron developed by Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) and used for the first time in ISRO in the 2000 kN semi-cryogenic engine.

Many injector elemental level ignition tests were conducted at the Propulsion Research Laboratory Division (PRLD) facility of VSSC for characterisation, it said.

# Macron presses trade, Ukraine during Xi's Paris visit

PARIS, May 6 (AP)

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron put trade disputes and Ukraine-related diplomatic efforts on top of the agenda for talks on Monday with Chinese President Xi Jinping, who arrived in France for a two-day State visit opening his European tour.

In Paris, Xi first joined a meeting with Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen meant to address broader European Union concerns. The discussions will be closely watched from Washington, a month before President Joe Biden is expected to pay his own state visit to France.

In his introductory remarks,



French President Emmanuel Macron, (C) China's President Xi Jinping and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen attend a trilateral meeting at the Elysee Palace in France, on Monday. (AP/PTI)

Macron said the meeting would address trade issues and how to ensure "fair competition," then the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. France seeks

to convince China to use its influence to move Russia toward ending the war in Ukraine.

"We are at a turning point in

our history" as the Europe-China relationship faces challenges, Macron said, adding that "the future of our continent will very clearly also depend on our ability to develop balanced relations with China."

At the start of the meeting, Xi said "the world today has entered a new period of turbulence and change," adding that "as two important forces in the world, China and Europe should ... Continuously make new contributions to world peace and development."

Xi's European trip, the first in five years, seeks to rebuild relations at a time of global tensions. After France on Monday and Tuesday, he will head to Serbia and Hungary.

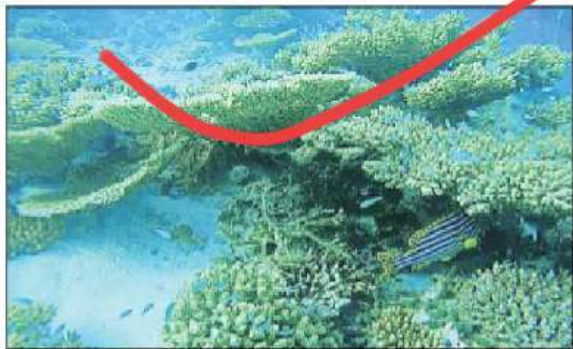
# 'Marine heatwaves cause intense coral bleaching in Lakshadweep'

KOCHI, May 6 (PTI)

MARINE heatwaves are triggering widespread bleaching of coral reefs in the Lakshadweep Sea, wherein corals lose their vibrant colours due to stress—a concerning phenomenon.

Survey results from various Lakshadweep Islands revealed that a considerable percentage of the hard coral species have undergone severe bleaching, researchers of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) here said.

The bleaching was primarily due to a prolonged period of marine heat waves affecting the region since late October 2023,



they said.

Marine heatwaves are rare extreme weather events that involve prolonged periods of

abnormally high ocean temperatures, the CMFRI said in a statement here.

These temperatures often

exceed the 90th percentile of typical regional ocean temperatures based on historical data, it said. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), this level of DHW poses a substantial risk of coral bleaching, threatening the region's diverse marine ecosystems.

"Such heat stress levels signify a severe threat to coral health, leading to extensive bleaching where corals lose the symbiotic algae (zooxanthellae), compromising their survival by depriving them of essential nutrients," said Dr KR Sreenath, Senior Scientist of CMFRI. If the DHW continues to rise, it could

precipitate an unprecedented biodiversity crisis due to multi-species mortality, he said.

Dr Shelton Padua, senior scientist at CMFRI, identified the primary causes of these marine heatwaves as excessive heat atmospheric transfer coupled with shifts in ocean currents, leading to unusually high water temperatures.

Since October 27, 2023, the Lakshadweep Sea, spanning from 80.0 to 12.0 N latitude and 71.0 to 75.0 E longitude, has been experiencing these conditions, with temperatures consistently registering rises greater than one degree Celsius above the norm, it said.