

# EVACUATE

Unprecedented order by Israeli military to 1 million Palestinians

'Move to Southern Gaza before we launch fresh action' It would be **CALAMITOUS**, says UN of Israeli plan



**IRAN THREATENS ESCALATION**  
IF ISRAEL DOESN'T STOP

JERUSALEM, Oct 13 (AP)

ISRAEL'S military told some 1 million Palestinians on Friday to evacuate northern Gaza and head to the southern part of the besieged territory, an unprecedented order applying to almost half the population ahead of an expected ground invasion against the ruling Hamas militant group.

Palestinians began a mass exodus from Gaza on Friday after Israel's military told some 1 million people to evacuate.

The UN warned that so many people fleeing en masse would be calamitous, and it urged Israel to reverse the order. Hamas, which staged a shocking and brutal attack on Israel nearly a week ago, dismissed it as a ploy and called on people to stay in their homes. Families in cars, trucks and donkey carts packed with blankets and possessions streamed down a main road out of Gaza City. Israel hammered neighbourhoods in southern Gaza with airstrikes on Friday, and it said ground troops have conducted temporary raids in the territory to battle militants, search for weapons and evidence of the missing hostages. Many hesitated to leave, fearing nowhere was safe. Gaza is sealed off from food, water and medical supplies and under a virtual total power blackout.

The war has already claimed over 2,800 lives on both sides and sent tensions soaring across the region. Israel has traded fire in recent days with Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, sparking fears of an ever wider conflict, though that frontier is currently calm. Weekly Muslim prayers brought protests across the Middle East, and tensions ran high in Jerusalem's Old City.

(Contd on page 5)



Palestinians evacuate wounded people after an Israeli airstrike in Rafah refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip. (AP/PTI)

# G20 parliamentary Speakers pledge to combat terror

NEW DELHI, Oct 13 (PTI)

THE Speakers of Parliaments of G20 countries on Friday pledged to utilise their legislative, budgetary and oversight functions to play their part in combating terrorism and violent extremism.

In a joint statement adopted at the Parliament-20 Summit here, they also condemned terrorism in all forms and manifestations, including those on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief.

"The unanimous adoption of the Joint Declaration at P20 Bharat exemplifies the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. As public representatives, we pledge to collaborate for a human-centric, prosperous



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Duarte Pacheco at 9th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit, at Yashobhoomi Convention Centre in New Delhi on Friday. (PTI)

and harmonious future. delegates for their support," Many congratulations to all the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla,

who chaired the P20 Summit, said on X. The joint statement by P20 leaders comes against the backdrop of the lingering war in Ukraine and the recent outbreak of conflict between Israel and the Hamas. The parliamentary leaders said terrorism constituted one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

"We strongly condemn all terrorist acts against critical infrastructure, including critical energy facilities, and against other vulnerable targets. All acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed," the joint statement said. It said effective counter-terrorism measures, support for victims of terrorism and the protection of

human rights were not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing. "A holistic approach on the basis of international law can effectively counter terrorism. Efforts to increase the effectiveness of international cooperation should be strengthened to deny terrorist groups safe haven, freedom of operations, movement and recruitment, as well as financial, material or political support," the joint statement said.

"In the light of our legislative, budgetary and oversight functions, we pledge to play our role in combating terrorism and violent extremism," it said. The joint statement adopted seven paragraphs from the G20 Leaders Declaration held in Delhi last month.

# 200 Indians return from Israel

NEW DELHI, Oct 13 (PTI)

GLAD to be home and traumatised by what they had seen in the last few days, the first batch of over 200 Indians returned from Israel on Friday with the sound of air raid sirens, rocket fire and screams ringing loud in their ears.

“We woke up to sounds of air raid sirens. We stay in central Israel and I don't know what shape this conflict will take,” said Shashwat Singh soon after landing at Delhi airport along with his wife.

The post-doctoral researcher in agriculture, who has been staying in Israel since 2019, said the sound of those sirens and the nightmarish experience of the past few days still haunt him. The evacuation of Indians is a “praiseworthy step”, Singh said soon after the flight landed.

“We hope peace will be



Indian nationals evacuated from Israel under Operation Ajay onboard a flight destined for New Delhi.

(PTI)

restored and we will return to work... The Indian Government got in touch with us via email. We are thankful to Prime Minister Modi and the Indian Embassy in Israel.”

India has launched

Operation Ajay to facilitate the return of those who wish to come back home as a series of brazen attacks on Israeli towns by Hamas militants over the weekend triggered fresh tension in the region.

# 'Intense western disturbance to bring widespread rain to N-W India'

NEW DELHI, Oct 13 (PTI)

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AN INTENSE western disturbance is expected to bring widespread rain to northwest India and some parts of central India over the next four days, the India Meteorological Department said on Friday.

This is the first intense western disturbance of the season and will lead to heavy rainfall/snowfall in part of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, the Met office said.

Widespread rainfall is expected over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi on Monday. Under the influence of the western disturbance, an induced cyclonic circulation is likely to form over central Pakistan and neighbourhood during the next 24 hours. This system is likely to intensify further with the possibility of merger of a fresh western disturbance on October 15, the IMD said.

The system will influence northwest and central India from Friday night to October 17. It is likely to receive moisture from the Arabian Sea.

# Exports dip 2.6% to USD 34.47 bn in Sept

- He expressed hope that in the remaining six-months, the country's outbound shipments would register positive growth

NEW DELHI Oct 13 (PTI)

EXPORTS contracted by 2.6 per cent to USD 34.47 billion in September even as the country's merchandise trade deficit narrows to USD 19.37 billion during the month under review, according to the Government data released on Friday.

Easing commodity prices helped in cutting down the country's import bill by 15 per cent to USD 53.84 billion in September, the 10th consecutive month of decline.

During April-September this fiscal, exports contracted by 8.77 per cent to USD 211.4 billion. Imports during the six-month period fell by 12.23 per cent to USD 326.98 billion, leaving a trade deficit of USD 115.58 billion. Briefing media on the trade data, Commerce

Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that the September figures are reflecting that "green shoots" are visible at exports front despite global challenges. He expressed hope that in the remaining six-months, the country's outbound shipments would register positive growth.

The contraction which was there in double digits during April, May, June and July, is now in single digits, he said, adding, "there is an optimism which we will see in the coming months" also. The weekly exports trend during the current month is showing a positive movement, he added. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has forecasted that the global trade will grow only by 0.8 per cent in 2023.

Despite this, Barthwal said that India's exports are doing "well" and in fact entering new markets also like Turkey for office equipment; and Finland, Malta and Philippines for drug formulations.

When asked about the reasons for dip in imports, he said the country's import substitution policy is working well and global commodity prices including crude oil

have also come down.

The Government has revised its August exports figure to USD 38.45 billion from USD 34.48 billion, while imports numbers were updated to USD 60.1 billion from USD 58.64 billion. Due to this revision, the exports in August recorded a growth of 3.88 per cent. Government data had showed a decline of 6.86 per cent.

When asked about this high upward revision of about USD 4 billion in August, the Secretary said sometimes the shipments go out but those numbers do not get recorded for some reasons, and; sometimes customs withholds some consignments for scrutiny, so that data also not get released.

Further in September, exports of 12 out of the 30 key sectors exhibited positive growth and that included iron ore; cotton yarn/fabrics; dairy and poultry products; pharma; engineering; and marine products. Sectors which recorded negative growth included petroleum products, textiles, electronic goods, chemicals, gems and jewellery, leather, tea and coffee.

# US Defence Secretary Austin in Israel to meet with its leaders

To see firsthand weapons and security assistance provided by US

■ By **Lolita C Baldor**  
TEL AVIV, Oct 13 (AP)

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin is in Israel on Friday for meetings with senior Government leaders and to see firsthand some of the US weapons and security assistance that Washington rapidly delivered to Israel in the first week of its war with the militant Hamas group.

Austin is the second high-level US official sent by President Joe Biden to visit Israel in two days.

His quick trip from Brussels, where he was attending a NATO Defence Ministers meeting, came a day after Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in the region. Blinken is continuing the frantic Mideast diplomacy, seeking to avert an expanded regional conflict.

Austin met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and spent nearly two hours with Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant and the Israeli War Cabinet.

Speaking in front reporters before his meeting with the Prime Minister, Austin told

Netanyahu, "As the president said, we have your back." He added, "We do stand with you, Mr. Prime Minister."

Defence officials travelling with Austin said he wants to underscore America's unwavering support for the people of Israel and commitment to making sure the country has what it needs to defend itself.

A senior defence official said the US has already given Israel small diameter bombs as well

as interceptor missiles for its Iron Dome system and more will be delivered. Other munitions are expected to arrive on Friday.

Austin has spoken nearly daily with Gallant and has directed the rapid shift of US ships, Intelligence support and other assets to Israel and the region. Within hours after the brutal Hamas attack across the border into Israel, the US moved warships and aircraft to the region.

The USS Gerald R Ford aircraft carrier strike group is already in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, and a second carrier was departing Friday from Virginia, also heading to the region.

Austin declined to say if the US is doing surveillance flights in the region, but the US is providing intelligence and other planning assistance to the Israelis, including advice on the hostage situation.

## 27 Americans killed in Hamas attacks

■ US to arrange charter flights to evacuate its citizens from Israel, says White House

■ By **Lalit K Jha**  
WASHINGTON, Oct 13 (PTI)

AT LEAST 27 American citizens have died and 14 remain unaccounted for as a result of unfolding violence in Israel and the US will arrange char-

ter flights to evacuate its citizens from the strife-torn Jewish state, the White House has announced.

Palestinian militant group Hamas carried out a barrage of air strikes in Southern Israel on Saturday.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in response launched multiple attacks targeting Hamas' key infrastructure. So far, over 2,000 people have been killed in Israel and the Gaza Strip in the biggest esca-

lation in decades between the two sides.

India is one of the first countries to evacuate its citizens from Israel.

On the sixth day of violence, the Israeli military said more than 1,300 people, including 222 soldiers, were killed in Israel. In the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, over 1,400 people have been killed in Israel's offensive against the Palestinian militant group, according to authorities there.

# Jaishankar speaks to Saudi minister on 'grave situation' in West Asia

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 13

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar Friday spoke to his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan and discussed the “grave” situation arising out of the unprecedented attacks on Israeli cities by Hamas militants over the weekend. The external affairs minister's phone conversation with Farhan came two days after he discussed the crisis with Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

“Appreciated the conversation with Foreign Minister HH @FaisalbinFarhan of Saudi Arabia,” the external affairs minister said on 'X'. “Discussed the grave situation in the Middle East,” he said.

The sudden escalation in hostilities between Israel and Hamas has triggered global concerns. Leading powers like Germany, the US and the UK emphasised the importance of preventing the situation from further escalation.

**WAR MAY OPEN OTHER FRONTS, WARNS**  
Iran Foreign Minister after meeting in Beirut

**AS SUPPLIES BEGIN TO RUN OUT IN GAZA,**  
UN seeks \$300 million in aid for Palestinians

**U.S. SAYS CARRIER STRIKE GROUP IN REGION,**  
ready to deploy more assets should need arise

# Iran, Hezbollah hold talks, threaten Israel north



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, (left), with Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bouhabib, in Beirut, Friday. AP

Amirabdollahian meets Hezbollah's chief Nasrallah, Lebanon caretaker PM

AGENCIES  
BEIRUT, OCTOBER 13

IRAN'S FOREIGN Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian on Friday discussed Israel's war against Hamas with the head of the powerful Tehran-backed Lebanese armed group Hezbollah, which has launched its own cross-border attacks on Israel.

Amirabdollahian, who arrived in Beirut late on Thursday, said he had met Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah as well as Lebanon's caretaker PM Najib Mikati and caretaker Foreign Minister Abdallah Bouhabib.

Local media outlet Al-Mayadeen said the Iranian minister and Nasrallah had discussed Hamas' attack on Israel. Iran also supports Hamas, and has lauded the group's attack on Israel but has denied any involvement.

Hezbollah has exchanged fire with Israel across the border this week, and Israel has responded by striking an observation post belonging to the group as well as Lebanese villages.

Amirabdollahian told reporters on Friday that Israel was committing "war crimes" in Gaza, adding that Iran had asked Egypt, which borders Gaza, the United Nations and aid groups to



"In light of continued aggression, war crimes, and siege on Gaza, opening other fronts is a real possibility"

**HOSSEIN AMIRABDOLLAHIAN**  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER,  
IRAN

allow it to send humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

On Thursday, Amirabdollahian said Israel's actions against the Palestinians would receive a response from Iran's allies and that Israel would have to bear the consequences.

Amirabdollahian said Thursday that if Israel's bombardment of Gaza continues, the war may open on "other fronts," an apparent reference to the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.



Rockets are fired from Gaza towards Israel on Friday. Reuters

## Austin reaches Tel Aviv, pledges more aid

AGENCIES  
JERUSALEM, OCTOBER 13

US DEFENCE Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Friday that the Pentagon was ready to deploy more military aid to Israel as Israeli forces prepare for a likely invasion of Gaza in response to a devastating attack by militant group Hamas.

Austin, who spoke alongside Israeli counterpart, Yoav Gallant, said that munitions, air defence capabilities and other equipment and resources were "rapidly flowing" to Washington's closest Middle Eastern ally.

The United States and other Western allies have said they will



US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin (right), with Israel's Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant in Tel Aviv on Friday. AP

support Israel as it prosecutes what Israeli leaders say will be a prolonged war.

The USS Gerald R. Ford strike

group is now in the region led by the largest aircraft carrier in the world. We've augmented US fighter aircraft squadrons in the

Middle East and stand ready to deploy additional assets if necessary," Austin said in Tel Aviv.

"US remains the most powerful country in the world and we remain fully able to project power and uphold our commitments and direct resources to multiple theatres," Austin said.

A day after visiting Israel, the US secretary of state, Antony J. Blinken, met with King Abdullah II of Jordan and Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the Palestinian Authority, which lost control of Gaza in 2007 when Hamas took it by force. At his meeting with Abbas, Blinken "extended his condolences to the families of Palestinian civilian victims," according to the State Department.

## Hamas practised in plain sight, posting mock attack weeks before border breach

MICHAEL BIESECKER  
& SARAH EL DEEB  
OCTOBER 13

LESS THAN a month before Hamas fighters blew through Israel's high-tech "Iron Wall" and launched an attack that would leave more than 1,200 Israelis dead, they practiced in a very public dress rehearsal.

A slickly produced two-minute propaganda video posted to social media by Hamas on Sept. 12 shows fighters using explosives to blast through a replica of the border gate, sweep in on pickup trucks and then move building by building through a full-scale reconstruction of an Israeli town, firing automatic weapons at human-silhouetted paper targets.

The Islamic militant group's live-fire exercise dubbed operation "Strong Pillar" also had militants in body armor and combat fatigues carrying out operations that included the destruction of mock-ups of the wall's concrete towers and a communications antenna, just as they would do for real in the deadly attack last Saturday.

While Israel's highly regarded security and intelligence services were clearly caught flat-footed by Hamas' ability to breach its Gaza defenses, the group appears to have hidden its extensive preparations for the deadly assault in plain sight.

The Associated Press reviewed and verified key details from videos Hamas released over the last year, primarily through the so-



Live-fire exercise dubbed operation "Strong Pillar" outside Al-Mawasi. AP

cial media app Telegram.

Using satellite imagery, the AP matched the location of the mocked-up town to a patch of desert outside Al-Mawasi, a Palestinian town on the southern coast of the Gaza Strip. A large sign in Hebrew and Arabic at the gate says "Horesh Yaron," the name of a controversial Israeli settlement in the occupied Palestinian West Bank.

In a separate video posted to Telegram from last year's Strong Pillar exercise on December 28, Hamas fighters are shown storming what appears to be a mockup Israeli military base, complete with a full-size model of a tank with an Israeli flag flying from its turret. The gammen move through the cinderblock buildings, seizing other men playing the roles of Israeli soldiers as hostages.

The seeds of Israel's failure to anticipate and stop Saturday's attack go back at least a decade. AP