

# Potential to end conflict

## Iran's envoy Elahi praises India for its morality, humanity on global stage

NEW DELHI, Nov 2 (ANI)

**PRAISING** India for its morality and humanity on the global stage, Iran's Ambassador to India, Iraj Elahi has said that India possesses the potential to play a pivotal role in putting an end to the brutalities in the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict.

Speaking to ANI, the Iranian envoy took a sharp dig at Israel for its ground offensive in Gaza and said, "Undoubtedly, India boasts a rich history of upholding moral courage and showcasing the indomitable human spirit. With this in mind, I firmly believe that India will not turn a blind eye to the ongoing genocide in Gaza. In fact, India possesses the potential to play a pivotal role in putting an end to the brutalities inflicted by the Zionists."

He said that as India aspires to become the voice of the Global South, it cannot be discussed without discussing the problems of people in Palestine.

"India has always been a steadfast bastion of morality and humanity on the global stage. The indelible impact of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings and his inspiring words on Palestine are etched into the collective memory of all. India aspires to become the voice of the global South, but we can-



This photo released by the Israeli military on Thursday, shows ground operations inside the Gaza Strip. (AP/PTI)

not discuss the global South without acknowledging the immense suffering endured by its people, particularly in the occupied lands of Palestine," he said.

"The current situation presents a prime opportunity for India to lend its support to the voice of the global South," he added.

Alleging that the widespread atrocities committed by Israel have reached their peak in the past three weeks, Elahi said Israel has shown a lack of respect for international law and universal moral values.

"They have repeatedly disregarded resolutions ratified by international and global institutions. It is clear that they will not comply with the recent UNGA resolution and instead choose to continue their brutal actions in Gaza," he added.

The humanitarian aid sent by India for the people of Palestine arrived in Egypt on Sunday last week, the Ministry of External Affairs said. The Indian envoy to Egypt, Ajit Gupte handed over the relief material to the Egyptian Red Crescent for onward transmission to Palestine.

## Military in Iraq, Syria targeted: US

WASHINGTON DC, Nov 2 (ANI)

**AFTER** the October 7 attack by Iranian-backed Hamas forces on Israel, the US military has blamed other Iranian-backed proxy groups for near-daily attacks against its forces in Iraq and Syria.

US forces in Iraq and Syria have been attacked with drones or rockets at least 27 times in recent days, a Pentagon spokesman said on Tuesday (local time) as cited by a Voice of America report. US personnel believe that retaliatory action is required before more powerful weaponry is used against the US military. US military has responded with precision strikes against facilities in Syria tied to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and affiliated groups, but the attacks against US personnel, while largely unsuccessful, have not stopped, according to Voice of America.

# Govt reserved 75% of defence capital acquisition budget: Rajnath

BENGALURU, Nov 2 (PTI)

THE Government has reserved 75 per cent of the defence capital acquisition budget, which amounts to approximately Rs one lakh crore, for purchases from local companies, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday.

The move is to ensure adequate demand assurance for the domestic industries, he said at the 'India Manufacturing Show-2023' here, as he listed the steps taken for MSMEs in the defence sector.

"We are the first Government which imposed restrictions on itself for the import of weapons. We released five positive indigenisation lists, under which 509 equipment have been identified, the manufacturing of which will now take place in India," Singh said. In addition, the Minister said four positive indigenisation lists for Defence Public Sector Undertakings



An Unmanned Aerial Vehicle from L&T and a cheetah helicopter of HAL on display during inauguration of the India Manufacturing Show 2023 at Bangalore International Exhibition Centre in Bengaluru, on Thursday. (PTI)

(DPSUs) were also promulgated, under which 4,666 items were identified, that will be manufactured within the country. "These steps will strengthen our MSMEs and make them 'Aatmanirbhar,'" he said.

Singh also referred to the Innovations for Defence

Excellence (iDEX) initiative, which was launched to invite new ideas in defence manufacturing through start-ups and innovators. He added that iDEX Prime was launched to support projects, requiring support beyond Rs 1.5 crore up to Rs 10 crore, to help the start-

ups in the defence sector.

Singh highlighted the importance the Government attaches to the small-scale industries and listed out a number of decisions taken to ensure their welfare.

These include the MUDRA (Micro Units Development &

Refinance Agency Ltd) scheme, launched in 2015, under which a provision was made to provide collateral-free loans to MSMEs. The government also provided additional credit worth crores of rupees to MSMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Putin signs bill to revoke Russia's ratification on nuclear test ban

MOSCOW, Nov 2 (AP)

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PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin on Thursday signed a bill revoking Russia's ratification of a global nuclear test ban, a move that Moscow said was needed to establish parity with the United States.

Putin has said that rescinding the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, also known as the CTBT, would "mirror" the stand taken by the US, which has signed but not ratified the nuclear test ban.

Both Houses of the Russian Parliament voted last month to revoke Moscow's ratification of the bill.

The CTBT, adopted in 1996, bans all nuclear explosions anywhere in the world, but the treaty was never fully implemented. In addition to the US, it has yet to be ratified by China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel, Iran and Egypt. There are widespread concerns that Russia may resume nuclear tests to try to discourage the West from continuing to offer military support to Ukraine. Many Russian hawks have spoken in favour of a resumption of the tests.

Putin has noted that some experts argue for the necessity of conducting nuclear tests but said he had not formed an opinion on the issue.

# Sunak hails Bletchley Declaration to tackle risks from AI; India endorses pact

LONDON, Nov 2 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Rishi Sunak, who is leading the talks on Thursday at the AI Safety Summit convened by the UK, hailed the Bletchley Declaration as a “landmark” agreement between 28 countries, including India, on the shared responsibility to address the risks associated with artificial intelligence.

In the lead up to the two-day AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park, Buckinghamshire, Sunak had already announced the world’s first AI Safety Institute to be set up in Britain to examine, evaluate, and test new types of AI to inform national and international policymaking. The summit is aimed at focussing on international priorities for artificial intelligence.

Besides his discussions with government representatives from around the world on day

two of the summit, Sunak will also hear from companies at the forefront of AI, academia and civil society, focused on the concrete action needed to ensure AI safety. Those attending include major AI business leaders like OpenAI, Anthropic, Google DeepMind, Microsoft and Meta. Tech billionaire and X chief Elon Musk is scheduled for a special one-on-one session with Sunak.

“I believe there will be nothing more transformative to the futures of our children and grandchildren than technological advances like AI. We owe it to them to ensure AI develops in a safe and responsible way, gripping the risks it poses early enough in the process,” said Sunak. “The first-ever global AI Safety Summit led by the UK has already seen major AI powers sign up to the landmark Bletchley Declaration, agreeing on the shared respon-

sibility to address the risks and urgently work together on frontier AI safety and research. The UK has led the way in this global conversation on AI safety, but no one country can tackle the risks alone,” he said.

The Bletchley Declaration on AI safety clinched on Wednesday sees 28 countries from across the globe including in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, as well as the EU, agreeing to the urgent need to understand and collectively manage potential risks through a new joint global effort to ensure AI is developed and deployed in a safe, responsible way for the benefit of the global community. India, represented by Union Minister of State for Entrepreneurship, Skill Development, Electronics and Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar, was among the 28 countries to endorse the agreement.

# General elections in Pak to be held on Feb 8

ISLAMABAD, Nov 2 (PTI)

PAKISTAN'S general elections will be held on February 8, it was announced on Thursday after the election commission officials met President Arif Alvi at the directives of the Supreme Court, ending uncertainty over the much-awaited polls in the cash-strapped country.

The new date was announced by the President House in a statement following a meeting between the top election officials and President Alvi, hours after the election commission lawyer told the apex court that elections will be held on February 11.

On the order of the Supreme Court, Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja along with Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan and four members of the electoral body met President Alvi to discuss the general elections

date, the President's office said.

"The President heard about the progress the ECP has made in delimitation and for elections. After a detailed discussion the meeting unanimously agreed to hold General Elections in the country on 8th February 2024," it added.

Earlier, the ECP told the Supreme Court about February 11 date during a hearing of a set of petitions calling for holding elections within 90 days after the dissolution of the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures.

Last month, the ECP announced that elections would be held in January 2024 but stopped short of announcing a date. A three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan and Justice Athar Minallah took up the pleas moved by the SCBA, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and others.

# US, Egypt, Qatar seek humanitarian pause in war

RAFAH, Nov 2 (AP)

ISRAEL'S troops advanced toward Gaza City on Thursday, as the Palestinian death toll rose above 9,000. With no end in sight after weeks of heavy fighting, US and Arab mediators intensified efforts to ease Israel's siege of the Hamas-ruled enclave and called for at least a brief halt to the hostilities in order to aid civilians.

US President Joe Biden suggested a humanitarian "pause" the day before, as an apparent agreement among the US, Egypt, Israel and Qatar, which mediates with Hamas, allowed hundreds of Palestinians with foreign passports and dozens of wounded to leave Gaza for the first time.

## Israel's ground troops advance toward Gaza City



Dozens more left on Thursday. Israel did not immediately respond to Biden's remarks, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has previously ruled out a ceasefire. Arab countries, including those allied with the US and at peace with Israel, have expressed mounting unease with the war. Jordan recalled its ambassador from Israel and told Israel's envoy to remain out of the country until there's a halt to the war and the "humanitarian catastrophe" it is causing. More than 3,700 Palestinian children have been killed in 25 days of fighting, and bombings have driven more than half the territory's 2.3 mil-

lion people from their homes, while food, water and fuel run low. Israeli troops pushed into Gaza in larger numbers over the weekend after three weeks of heavy airstrikes that have demolished entire neighbourhoods.

The departure of Palestinians through the Rafah crossing into Egypt on Wednesday came after weeks of talks. It was first time people left Gaza other than four hostages released by Hamas and another rescued by Israeli forces. Israel has also allowed more than 260 trucks carrying food and medicine through the crossing, but aid workers say it's not nearly enough.

← Palestinians loot a truck with humanitarian aid near the Rafah border crossing in the Gaza Strip on Thursday. (AP/PTI)