

# PM Modi to lay Foundation Stone for redevelopment of 28 stations in 3 States

KOLKATA, Feb 24 (PTI)

**PRIME** Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone for redevelopment of 28 stations in West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar under the 'Amrit Bharat Station Scheme' on February 26, a top Eastern railway official said. Eastern Railway general manager Milind K Deouskar said on Saturday that redevelopment of the 28 stations will entail an estimated cost of Rs 704 crore.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on February 26 lay the foundation stone of 550 Amrit Bharat stations to improve facilities at railway stations. As part of it, he will, through the virtual mode, lay the foundation stone for redevelopment of 28 stations over Eastern

Railway jurisdiction in West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar under the 'Amrit Bharat Station Scheme', Deouskar told reporters at the Eastern Railway headquarters here.

Of these, Bandel in West Bengal will get the single largest chunk of finance with major redevelopment work to transform it into a world class station with modern facilities and amenities at an estimated cost of Rs 307 crore, he said.

He said that of the 28 stations, 17 are in West Bengal, seven in Jharkhand and four in Bihar. He said that in order to ensure safety of passengers and road users, ER was in the process of substituting manned level crossings with underpasses.

## SINDH PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY

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# Newly-elected members from Pak's PPP, PML-N take oath; Oppn parties boycott

KARACHI, Feb 24 (PTI)

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**THE** newly-elected members belonging to the PPP, PML-N and other ally parties on Saturday took oath in the Sindh Provincial Assembly, amidst a boycott by the Opposition parties against the alleged rigged results in the February 8 polls.

Newly-sworn-in Assembly Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani conducted the oath ceremony from which the newly-won legislators backed by former Prime Minister

Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) and other Opposition parties were absent. "The Sindh Assembly's MPAs elect took their oath on Saturday with protests continuing in several parts of Karachi by some Opposition parties against alleged rigged results in the general elections earlier this month," said an official.

He said the independent candidates backed by Khan's PTI, Grand Democratic Alliance and Jamaat Islaami were absent.



# EGYPT 'NO' TO PALESTINIANS

Originally designated as a "safe zone", Rafah is now being targeted by Israeli airstrikes, as well. Those fleeing the violence have nowhere safe to go. However, Egypt, the only country aside from Israel that has a border with Gaza, has rebuffed pressure to accept Palestinian refugees.

BY LIYANA KAYALI

**A**ROUND 1.5 million Palestinian civilians are currently squeezed into the southern Gaza city of Rafah after repeated expulsions forced by Israeli bombardment and ground assaults to evacuate further and further south.

The town, which originally had a population of 2,50,000, is now host to more than half of Gaza's entire population. They are sheltering in conditions the UN's top aid official has called "abysmal", with disease spreading and famine looming.

In a military onslaught the International Court of Justice has ruled a plausible case of genocide, Israel has so far killed over 29,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Now there are increasing fears Israel's expected ground assault on Rafah could push civilians across the border into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

Originally designated as a "safe zone", Rafah is now being targeted by Israeli airstrikes, as well. Those fleeing the violence have nowhere safe to go.

However, Egypt, the only country aside from Israel that has a border with Gaza, has rebuffed pressure to accept Palestinian refugees displaced by Israel. Reports have indicated that Israeli officials have tried to lobby international support to compel Egypt to accept refugees from Gaza.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, however, has been adamant in refusing to allow humanitarian corridors or the entry of large numbers of Palestinians into Sinai. He has called it a "red line" that, if crossed, would "liquidate the Palestinian cause".

In recent days, the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, has validated Egypt's position. Grandi said displacing Gazans to Egypt would be "catastrophic" for both Egypt and the Palestinians, who, he indicated, would likely not be allowed to return.

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**WHY EGYPT IS OPPOSED TO THE IDEA** There are a few reasons for Egypt's opposition.

The first is that Egypt does not want to be seen to be facilitating ethnic cleansing through the permanent resettlement of Palestinians outside of Gaza. In October, a leaked document from Israel's Intelligence Ministry included recommendations to forcibly transfer of Gaza's population of 2.3 million out of the territory and into tent cities in Egypt's Sinai Desert. Government ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir have also both openly advocated the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza to make way for their replacement by Israeli settlers. Further, in January, a conference in Israel calling for this very plan was attended by 11 members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet and 15 additional members of parliament. While Netanyahu last month said Israel has "no intention of permanently occupying Gaza", he hasn't shut down talk from his ministers about it. When asked about the conference in January, for example, he said everyone was "entitled to their opinions".

Sisi is also conscious of the strong surge of sympathy the Egyptian public has demonstrated for the Palestinians and the support they have shown for his opposition to any displacement of people across the border. This is due to feelings of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, as well as an awareness of the lessons of history.

Recalling 1947-49, when an estimated 750,000 were either expelled or forced to flee their homes by Zionist forces during the war surrounding the creation of the state of Israel, Egypt doesn't want to be seen to be enabling another Nakba, or "catastrophe".

The total number of refugees

created by the Nakba now stands at around 6 million. According to the UN, about a third live in refugee camps, Israel having denied their right to return to their homeland.

Significantly, in November, Israel's minister for agriculture, Avi Dichter, declared: "We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba," adding, "Gaza Nakba 2023. That's how it'll end."

**EGYPT'S COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP WITH HAMAS:** Another key concern for Egypt is its security. If Palestinians were resettled in Sinai, it could make the Egyptian territory a new base from which to launch resistance operations. This could drag Egypt into a military conflict with Israel.

In addition, Sisi has only just managed to clamp down on Islamist insurgents in North Sinai in recent years and is presumably concerned that an influx of refugees could be destabilising.

Finally, Sisi likely believes Hamas could mount opposition to his regime.

After overthrowing President Mohamed Morsi in a military coup in 2013, the Sisi regime cracked down on the Muslim Brotherhood and repressed all dissent. This extended to a demonisation of Hamas, which grew out of the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestinian branch.

Between 2014 and 2016, the Egyptian military bombed and flooded tunnels linking Gaza with Egypt, at the same time as accusing Hamas of colluding with the Muslim Brotherhood against the state. It has also enforced Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Having said that, the relationship is not straightforwardly antagonistic. Hamas and Egypt have co-operated on counterinsurgency operations against the Islamic State in Sinai. Egypt has also played a role in mediating current and past ceasefire negotiations

between Hamas and Israel.

However, the latest rounds of negotiations have gone nowhere, leaving Egypt to nervously ramp up its warnings around any Israeli moves on the border.

Egypt and Israel have had a peace treaty since 1979, and their relationship has become stronger with Sisi in power. However, Egypt has threatened to suspend the peace treaty if Rafah is invaded.

**WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE THE PEOPLE OF GAZA?:** Netanyahu has vowed to push ahead with a ground incursion of Rafah in the coming weeks.

Concurrently, Egypt has moved to fortify its border and, according to reports and satellite images, begun building a walled buffer zone of about 21 square kilometres in the Sinai. This suggests Egypt is preparing for a potential removal or exodus of Palestinians.

While it isn't entirely clear whether this is being done in co-ordination with Israel or as a "contingency" measure, the zone would condemn Gazans to yet another densely packed open-air prison with dire human rights implications.

As much as states like Egypt and Jordan have strengthened their rhetorical opposition to Israel in the past few months, neighbouring Arab countries have done little to seriously pressure Israel to halt its military operations or significantly improve aid access to the Gaza Strip.

In fact, Egypt's intermittent closures of the Rafah crossing have delayed the entry of desperately needed aid into Gaza. There are also reports Egyptian authorities are demanding thousands of dollars in bribes from those desperate to leave via Rafah, deepening a sense of cynicism, despair and, ultimately, abandonment.

*(The Conversation)*  
(The writer is a post-doctoral Research Fellow, at University of Sydney)

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# Quad is a statement that others cannot have 'veto' on our choices: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, Feb 24 (PTI)

THE Quad is a statement that others cannot have a "veto" on choices of like-minded nations and the coalition is here to stay, grow and contribute to global prosperity, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday, amid mounting global concerns over China's rising assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific. In an address at a think-tank forum, Jaishankar described the coalition of India, the US, Japan and Australia as an "overhead light" that is a "creative, flexible, nimble, responsive and open-minded" enterprise.

The Quad has largely been focusing on bolstering cooperation to ensure a free and an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific in the face of Chinese belligerence.



The External Affairs Minister said the Quad reflects the growth of a multipolar global order and its central approach is collaborative, and not unilateral. "All four Governments have behaved differently from how they normally do. The Quad is an overhead light -- creative, flexible, nimble, responsive and open-minded enterprise. These are not adjectives we normally associate with the bureaucracy," he said explaining the principles that the grouping stands for.

Jaishankar also said that the

Quad has five messages, "One -- it reflects the growth of a multipolar order; two -- it is post-alliance and post-Cold War thinking; three -- it is against spheres of influence; four -- it expresses the democratising of the global space and a collaborative, not unilateral approach and five -- it is a statement that in this day and age, others cannot have a veto on our choices," he said.

He noted that the Quad is facilitated by the emergence of the Indo Pacific, adding it is propelled by a change in the global order that requires "more" and "not less collaboration".

The external affairs minister asserted that the Quad "is here to stay, the quad is here to grow and the quad is here to contribute," calling for making it more contemporary, relevant and more impactful.

# Nations must come together to face crises in world, say Navy Admirals

NEW DELHI, Feb 23 (PTI)

UNDERLINING that global commons are getting "contested," top admirals from the UK, France and the US on Friday pitched for forging partnership between like-minded nations to respond to ongoing crises in the world, provide stability, reduce risks and restore confidence.

Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar; Admiral Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, the United Kingdom; Admiral John C Aquilino, Commander, US Indo-Pacific Command;



Indian Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar, US Admiral John C Aquilino, French Navy Chief Admiral Nicolas Vaujour, Royal Navy officer Admiral Sir Benjamin John Key and Royal Australian Air Force Chief Air Marshal Robert Chipman, at the 9th edition of the Raisina Dialogue 2024, in New Delhi on Friday. (ANI)

Admiral Nicolas Vaujour, Chief of the Naval Staff, France; and

Air Marshal Robert Chipman, Chief of the Air Force, Australia took part in a panel discussion titled 'From the Aegean Sea to the South China Sea: Responding to Maritime Sieges,' held at the Raisina Dialogue here.

"If you can see what is happening in the South China Sea, and Red Sea where people are seeking to impose their will on the global commons... Then that ripple will be felt far and wide, and not just in that point. And, this is what separates the maritime environment from the land environment," Adm Key said.



# Voters have **right to know** about fulfillment of assurances by parties; **matter sub judice**: CEC

CHENNAI, Feb 24 (PTI)

THE voters have a right to know about the feasibility of fulfilling poll assurances made by political parties, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said on Saturday and made it clear that the matter is, however, sub judice.

Political parties have a right to make promises in their election manifestos and the electorate has a right to know if these are genuine and how these programmes could be funded, he said, adding the entire matter forms part of an ongoing case and the matter was sub judice.

At a press conference here, Rajiv Kumar, answering questions, said the



Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar during a press conference on poll preparedness for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls in Chennai on Saturday. (PTI)

Election Commission has prepared a 'proforma' to make parties to make a disclosure on their election promises. However, this aspect also relates to the pending court matter.

He said enforcement agencies have been directed to stay vigilant and prevent distribution of cash and freebies. National Payments Corporation of India too has been tasked to monitor online transactions.

To a question on 'fake news,' he said, 'today fake news is running as you mentioned that election dates have been announced,' This fake news has, however, been countered within half an hour and it was made amply clear that it was fake.

# New criminal justice laws

to be rolled out across India from July 1

**Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860**

**TO BE REPLACED BY**

**Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Act, 2023**

**Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973**

**TO BE REPLACED BY**

**Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023**

**Indian Evidence Act, 1872**

**TO BE REPLACED BY**

**Bharatiya Sakshya Act 2023**

NEW DELHI, Feb 24 (PTI)

THE newly-enacted laws -- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Act -- to completely overhaul the criminal justice system in the country will come into effect from July 1. However, the provision related to cases of hit and run by vehicle drivers will not be implemented immediately.

The three laws got the Parliament's approval on December 21 last year and President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent on December 25. According to three identical notifications issued by the Union Home Ministry, provisions of the new laws will come into force from July 1. The laws will replace the colonial-era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872 respectively.

*(Contd on page 3)*



# His country will win war, Ukraine's envoy tells UN

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 24 (AP)

UKRAINE'S Foreign Minister on Friday told sceptics who believe Ukraine can't win the war with Russia that they will be proven wrong: "Ukraine will win the war."

Dmytro Kuleba, speaking at the United Nations on the eve of the second anniversary of Russia's invasion, urged the world's nations to stand behind Ukraine. If they do, he said, victory will come "sooner rather than later." Russia's UN Ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, countered by repeating Moscow's claim.



Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba addresses a Security Council meeting on maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine on Friday at United Nations headquarters. (AP/PTI)

## End Ukraine crisis: Guterres

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 24 (IANS)

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL Antonio Guterres has called for an end to Ukraine crisis.

He made the appeal on Friday at a Security Council meeting scheduled to coincide with the second anniversary of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, Xinhua news agency reported. Two years on, the conflict

in Ukraine remains an open wound at the heart of Europe. It is high time for peace -- a just peace, based on the UN Charter, international law and UN General Assembly resolutions, said Guterres.

International rows shall be settled by peaceful means and all States shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any other State, he said.