

Ukraine Parliament passes bill allowing prisoners to join as military personnel

KYIV, May 9 (ANI)

UKRAINE'S Parliament has made a significant decision amidst the nation's pressing need for military personnel, passing a bill that would allow certain prisoners to enlist in the armed forces.

The move comes as Ukrainian forces confront a critical shortage of manpower, exacerbated by ongoing Russian advancements on the battlefield, Al Jazeera reported.

Wednesday's legislative move signifies a notable shift in Kyiv's stance on the issue. Previously, Ukrainian authorities had staunchly opposed such measures, frequently condemning Moscow for employing prisoners to bolster its military ranks. The bill's passage through Parliament is a pivotal step, awaiting final approval from the chairperson of Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Search operation in Poonch enters 6th day

JAMMU, May 9 (PTI)

THE security forces are yet to get a breakthrough even as the search operation to track down the terrorists responsible for attacking an IAF convoy that claimed the life of a corporal rank personnel, entered the sixth consecutive day on Thursday.

The security forces are trying to identify the attackers through four pictures of terrorists released by them.

A fresh search operation was launched in the border areas

of Akhnour belt following suspected movement of some persons last night, they said.

The Army, police and CRPF are conducting search operations in Shahsitar, Gursai, Sanai, Lasana and Sheendara top and adjoining areas, they said adding that the entire area has been cordoned off.

Terrorists targeted an Indian Air Force (IAF) convoy in the Shaistar area of Poonch district, in which an IAF corporal was killed in the line of duty and four others were injured on Saturday.

They are yet to get a breakthrough even after scanning the dense forest in the Surankote belt, they said.

Security forces, which made public four pictures of terrorists with one of them carrying a gun, are seeking their identification. The pictures were probably taken from CCTVs in the area, they said.

Earlier, posters offering a cash reward of Rs 20 lakh for any information leading to the arrest of two individuals, believed to be the prime suspects, were put up in Surankote.

Sri Lanka to hold prez election from Sept 17 to Oct 16

Colombo: Sri Lanka will hold presidential election between Sept 17 and Oct 16, the election commission said Thursday.

Prez Ranil Wickremesinghe, whose term ends in Nov, is likely to seek a mandate for the economic reforms he is carrying out in exchange for a \$3 billion IMF bailout loan. He was elected by lawmakers in 2022 after Gotabaya Rajapaksa quit following weeks of protests. Wickremesinghe, 75, will represent several parties as a national candidate under a new symbol, his aide said last month. He has led UNP since 1994. He has served as PM on five occasions.

Wickremesinghe may face challenge from his justice minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe. Former prez Maithripala Sirisena, the chairman of Sri Lanka Freedom Party, has said that Rajapakshe, 65, would be his party's candidate. PTI & BLOOMBERG

US won't supply weapons to hit Rafah, Biden warns Israel

Prez Acknowledges Civilians In Gaza Have Died By Bombs Supplied By US

Washington: US Prez Joe Biden said that he would not supply offensive weapons that Israel could use to launch an all-out assault on Rafah — the last major Hamas stronghold in Gaza — over concern for the well-being of over 1 million civilians sheltering there. Biden, in an interview with CNN on Wednesday, said that the US was still committed to Israel's defence and would supply Iron Dome rocket interceptors and other defensive arms but that if Israel goes into Rafah, "we're not going to supply the weapons and artillery shells used."

Biden acknowledged that "civilians have been killed in Gaza" by the type of heavy bombs that the US has been supplying — his first validation of what administration critics have been loudly protesting, even if he still stopped short of taking responsibility. His threat to hold up artillery shells expanded on earlier revelations that the US was going to pause a shipment of heavy bombs.

The US has historically provided enormous amounts of military aid to Israel. That has only accelerated in the aftermath of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, which killed some 1,200 people in Israel and led to about 250 being taken captive by militants.

Biden's comments and his decision last week to pause the shipment of heavy bombs to Israel are the most striking manifestations of the growing daylight between his administration and Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu's govt. Biden said Wednesday that Israel's actions around Rafah had "not yet" crossed his red lines, but



Israeli forces massed tanks and bombarded areas of Rafah on Thursday

US has held back aid before to indicate its displeasure or to influence policy

The relationship between the US and Israel has been a singular one since the Jewish state declared its independence in 1948 and President Harry S Truman just 11 minutes later made the US the first nation in the world to recognise it.

But the relationship has also long been marked by moments of deep stress. At first, under both Truman and President Dwight Eisenhower, the US refused to sell Israel weapons at all. President John F Kennedy became the first to open up the arsenal by providing Hawk anti-aircraft missiles. President Lyndon B. Johnson expanded ties by sending M-48 tanks, A-4 Skyhawk planes and F-4 Phantom planes. Presidents have held back aid to Israel before to indicate displeasure or influence policy. President Ronald Reagan more than once delayed shipments of

warplanes and other munitions out of dissatisfaction with Israeli intervention in Lebanon. President George H.W. Bush postponed \$10 billion in housing loan guarantees to keep American money from being used to finance settlement construction in the West Bank.

Overall, since World War II, the US has given more aid to Israel than any other country in the world. As of last year, the US had provided \$158.7 billion to Israel since its founding, the vast bulk of it, or \$124.3 billion, for its military and its missile defences, according to the Congressional Research Service. Under a 10-year memorandum of understanding sealed by President Barack Obama, Washington currently provides \$3.8 billion a year in military aid, not counting the \$15 billion in additional help approved last month by Congress and signed into law by Biden. NYT

has repeated that Israel needs to do far more to protect the lives of civilians in Gaza.

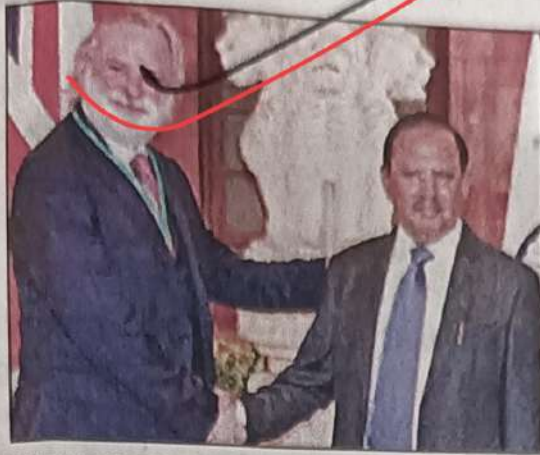
The shipment was supposed to consist of 1,800 2,000-pound (900-kg) bombs and 1,700 500-pound (225-kg) bombs, according to a senior US administration official. The focus of US concern was the larger explosives and how they could be used in a dense urban area.

"Civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs and other ways in which they go after population centers," Biden told CNN. "I made it clear that if they go into Rafah — they haven't gone into Rafah yet — if they go into Rafah, I'm not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah, to deal with the cities, that deal with that problem." "We're not walking away from Israel's security," the Democratic president continued. "We're walking away from Israel's ability to wage war in those areas."

Defence secretary Lloyd Austin earlier Wednesday confirmed the weapons delay, telling the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defence that the US paused "one shipment of high payload munitions."

It also comes as the Biden administration is due to deliver a first-of-its-kind formal verdict this week on whether the air strikes on Gaza and restrictions on delivery of aid have violated international and US laws designed to spare civilians from the worst horrors of war. A decision against Israel would further add to pressure on Biden to curb the flow of weapons and money to Israel. AP

Doval discusses India-UK ties with counterpart



UK NSA Tim Barrow (L) with NSA Ajit Doval in New Delhi

New Delhi: Foreign minister S Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval discussed progress in India-UK bilateral ties in a meeting with UK NSA Tim Barrow, while also exchanging views on regional and global issues.

Barrow is visiting India from May 9-10 for the India-UK strategic dialogue which he chaired with his counterpart Ajit Doval. In the meeting with Doval, they focused on the technology and security initiative, which will be a major bilateral mechanism to strengthen cooperation in critical and emerging technologies between two countries.

"They also discussed bilateral issues and regional and global matters of mutual interest. This visit will strengthen and further broaden the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries," said an official. TNN

U'khand rains ease wildfires, flash floods damage roads

Dehradun: Several parts of Uttarakhand, particularly the Kumaon region districts that have been worst-affected by raging forest fires, experienced moderate to heavy rainfall on Wednesday, reports Gaurav Talwar.

Bikram Singh, director of the regional meteorological centre, said, "A substantial amount of rain fell in the three districts of Bageshwar, Pithoragarh and Almora. We expect that the majori-

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ty of wildfires there have been extinguished by the downpour." He said in the next couple of days, rains will intensify in other parts of the state and the remaining wildfires in Nainital, Pauri Garhwal and Tehri Garhwal will also be doused.

While the fresh spell of downpour helped in controlling wildfires to a large extent, it led to some collateral damage as well.

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US 'meddling' in India's affairs: Russia on Pannun

Claims US Bid To 'Complicate' LS Elections

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Russia waded into the GS Pannun murder-for-hire case Wednesday to claim the US had not yet provided any "reliable evidence" about the involvement of Indian nationals in the alleged murder plot to kill the Khalistani rabble rouser. It also accused the Americans of meddling in India's internal affairs and "complicating" the ongoing LS elections by destabilising the internal political situation.

According to an agency report from Moscow, Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova, when asked about a Washington Post report that claimed India was trying to adopt the policies of Russia and Saudi Arabia, said, "According to the information we have, Washington has not yet provided any reliable evi-

'UNFOUNDED CLAIMS'

- Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Zakharova says **US yet to provide 'reliable evidence' to India** in the case
- Accuses US of making **'unfounded accusations' about religious freedoms**, says it reflects 'disrespect for Indian state' and 'misunderstanding of its national mentality'
- Describes interference as **'colonial period mentality'**
- Difficult to imagine a more **'repressive regime' than Washington**, says Zakharova

No relevant proof: MEA on Nijjar case

MEA said Thursday Canada has not provided any "specific" or "relevant" information in the Nijjar killing case and that no "formal communication" has been provided over the arrests of 3 Indians.

dence of the involvement of Indian citizens in the the murder of a certain GS Pannun.

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'India link to Nijjar killing': Canada Parl okays motion

Jalandhar: Canadian parliament has unanimously passed motion "M-112", introduced by Liberal MP Sukh Dhaliwal, highlighting "credible allegations of a link between agents of govt of India and the killing of a Canadian citizen, Hardeep Singh Nijjar", **reports IP Singh.**

The motion calls for an immediate review of measures aimed at holding accountable any person or agents of foreign states engaged in political interference, violence or related activities. It comes in the wake of the recent arrest of three men of Punjabi origin in connection with the murder.

Khalistan Tiger Force chief Nijjar was shot dead outside a gurdwara in the Canadian province of British Columbia on June 18 last year.

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