

Gaza peace initiative holds promise: PM Modi

INDIA SUPPORTS ALL EFFORTS AGAINST TERROR: MODI IN KNESSET

JERUSALEM, Feb 25 (PTI)

TERRORISM anywhere threatens peace everywhere, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Wednesday in an address at the Israeli Parliament, even as he threw New Delhi's weight behind the Gaza peace initiative, saying it holds the promise of a "just and durable peace" in the region.

Like Israel, India has a "consistent and uncompromising policy of zero tolerance for terrorism with no double standards," Modi said while conveying India's deepest condolences to the families who lost their near and dear ones in the terror attack carried out by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

PM Modi's address to the Knesset, Israel's house of representatives, came hours after he



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the gathering at the Knesset, Israeli parliament, in Israel. (PTI)

landed in the country to a rousing welcome with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu along with wife Sara receiving him at the Ben Gurion

airport.

"I also carry with me the deepest condolences of the people of India for every life lost and for every family whose world was

shattered in the barbaric terrorist attack by Hamas," Modi said.

"We feel your pain, we share your grief. India stands with Israel firmly and with full conviction in this moment and beyond. No cause can justify the murder of civilians. Nothing can justify terrorism."

The Prime Minister said India has also endured the pain of terrorism for a long time.

"We remember the 26/11 Mumbai attacks and the innocent lives lost, including Israeli citizens. Like you, we have a consistent and uncompromising policy of zero tolerance for terrorism with no double standards," Modi said.

"Terrorism aims to destabilise societies, to block development and to erode trust. Countering terrorism requires sustained and (Contd on page 5)

'Strategic reset', 'landmark moment': Israeli media hails Modi visit

By Harinder Mishra
JERUSALEM, Feb 25 (PTI)

AS PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday left for Israel from India for a visit expected to upgrade the bilateral ties to a new level, the Israeli media is describing the trip as a "strategic reset", a "landmark moment" and a "defining" phase.

Leading Israeli publications have given prominent coverage to Modi's trip, portraying it as a significant visit by a friend at a crucial juncture for the country.

From Government officials to ordinary citizens, the excitement surrounding the visit is palpable across Jerusalem. Any Indian walking down the streets is constantly greeted with "namaste" every few yards.

Roads leading to the Knesset were adorned with Indian and Israeli flags, and the Parliament building was illuminated in the colours of the Indian tricolour.



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German leader arrives in China to discuss fair trade, Ukraine war

BEIJING, Feb 25 (AP)

GERMAN Chancellor Friedrich Merz called Wednesday for deepening ties with China, while pushing for fairer trade rules between the two countries and seeking Chinese help on Ukraine.

Merz, who arrived in Beijing late morning for a whirlwind two-day visit, acknowledged differ-

ences during meetings with the country's top leaders and called for collaboration "wherever possible." "We have a few issues that we need to talk about today in the course of my visit," he told Chinese Premier Li Qiang. "But I think there is also great potential for further growth of both our economies."

Both Europe and China have

been buffeted by US President Donald Trump's tariffs, and Europe further by his demands that it take more responsibility for its own security and cede control of Greenland to the US.

Merz, on his first trip to China since taking office last May, has championed building a stronger Europe both economically and militarily to assert itself in an

emerging new world order.

Before landing in the Chinese capital, Merz indicated he would press for a fair economic playing field for German companies and China's assistance in bringing about an end to Russia's four-year-old war in Ukraine.

He stressed that for all the differences Europe has with China, "the big global political prob-

lems can no longer be tackled today without involving Beijing." Cooperation is needed to resolve crises and wars, including that in Ukraine, he said, noting that "Beijing's voice is heard, including in Moscow." Many European governments have been frustrated that China hasn't done more to pressure Russia to end the fighting.

Indian Navy to commission 'Dolphin Hunter' INS Anjadip in Chennai on 27th

CHENNAI, Feb 25 (PTI)

THE Indian Navy is set to strengthen its coastal defence by commissioning INS Anjadip at the Chennai port here on February 27. This is the third of eight vessels being built under the anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft project.

Built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers, Kolkata, Anjadip is a state-of-the-art vessel specifically designed to address the challenges of the "littoral combat environment" coastal and shallow waters vital for the nation's security, an official release said on Wednesday.

The 77-metre-long ship features a high-speed water-jet propulsion system, enabling it to achieve a top speed of 25 knots for rapid response and sustained operations. The vessel is engineered to act as a 'Dolphin Hunter', focused on the detection, tracking and neutralisation of enemy submarines in coastal areas.

The ship is packed with an indigenous, cutting-edge Anti-Submarine Warfare weapons and sensor package, including the hull-mounted sonar Abhay, and armed with Lightweight Torpedoes and ASW Rockets, the release said.

Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi is scheduled to take part in the commissioning ceremony on Friday.

The induction of 'Anjadip', named after the island off the coast of Karwar (North Karnataka in the Arabian Sea), bolsters the Navy's capacity to safeguard India's vast maritime interests and coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry area, the release said.

Besides the Anti-Submarine Warfare role, the warship is also equipped to take up Coastal Surveillance, Low-Intensity Maritime Operations and Search and Rescue operations, it added.

'Indigenous defence industry for local production, exports to be expanded'

NEW DELHI, Feb 25 (IANS)

INDIA has traversed a long distance from being a major importer of defence equipment to a manufacturer and exporter of platforms in all domains, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday.

In a meeting with trainee officers of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS)-2025 Batch at South Block here, the Minister voiced the Government's determination for expanding the capacity of indigenous defence industry for both local production and exports under 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', and the crucial role played by Indian diplomats in realising the vision. Rajnath Singh highlighted that



Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister

the global comity of nations is closely following India's growth story and looking up to its leadership role. According to a

Defence Ministry statement, the Minister encouraged the officers to work with honesty and integrity to further India's positive image. Defence Minister told them that, while conducting their duties abroad, they should always remember that they represent the aspirations of 1.4 billion Indians.

He urged them to remain open to new ideas, people, and perspectives from every culture and carry with them the values of India's civilisational wisdom. He also congratulated them for putting in hard work to join the coveted IFS.

The trainee officers were briefed on various defence diplomacy initiatives, defence budg-

et, Tri-service integration and defence acquisition by officials from verticals of the Ministry of Defence.

Meanwhile, the Government announced an allocation of Rs 7.8 lakh crore for the country's defence sector in the Union Budget for 2026-27, representing a 15 per cent increase over the corresponding figure of Rs 6.81 lakh crore for the previous financial year.

The defence forces have been allocated Rs 2.19 lakh crore for the purchase of military hardware as part of the capital outlay in the Budget, which constitutes a 21.8 per cent increase compared with the Rs 1.80 lakh crore allocated in FY 2025-26.

India, Israel may ink MoU on tech transfer for Iron Dome

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New Delhi: With PM Modi landing in Tel Aviv Wednesday, India and Israel are on the cusp of signing a landmark defence agreement that will take security ties between the two "friendly countries" to new heights. It is believed that there won't be sale of any weapon this time, with the focus being on transfer of technologies for exclusive advanced weapons systems that Israel has not offered to any other country till now.

In his address to the Israeli Parliament Knesset, Modi said, "In today's uncertain world, a strong defence partnership between trusted partners like India and Israel is of vital importance."

The latest Indo-Israel defence cooperation, in the form of an MoU, is likely to have two dimensions: tie-up for defensive systems and collaboration for offensive weapons, according to local media in Israel.

In the field of defence, deals are expected to focus on Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI)'s Arrow missile defence system, Rafael's David's Sling (can handle medium-range missiles and drones up to 300km) and Iron Dome (can intercept short-range rockets up to 4-70 km), and Rafael and Elbit's Iron Beam (100 kW beam designed to kill hostile aerial threats up to 10 km). However, all these Israel companies are tightlipped about the intended deals.

In the field of attack, agreements are expected to be struck and, in some cases have already been inked, for Rafael's SPICE 1000 guidance kits, Elbit Systems' Rampage air-to-ground missiles, Ice Breaker naval cruise missiles and IAI's supersonic Air LORA missiles.

Taking lessons from the Pakistan conflict last May when Islamabad sent waves of Turkish drones and Chinese PL-15 long-range air-to-air missiles towards India to target its military and civilian assets, the Modi govt wants to fortify the country's borders with an impregnable missile shield. Though India possesses Russia's S400 missile shield, Israel-developed Barak systems and indigenous Akash system to thwart aerial attacks, the country needs more effective systems like Israel's Iron Dome and Iron Beam to make this shield impregnable and protect its vast 15,106-km land borders and 7,516-km coastline. India wants technology transfer to manufacture these weapons under the 'Make in India' initiative in order to integrate them into its upcoming "Sudarshan Chakra"



India needs more effective systems like Israel's Iron Dome & Iron Beam to make the missile shield impregnable and protect its vast 15,106-km land borders and 7,516-km coastline

for a pan-India multi-layered shield by 2035.

There could be talks on acquisition of Golden Horizon, believed to be a successor of the Sparrow target missile family. Golden Horizon is a rare class of weapons designed to be released from aircraft. This missile can therefore easily be integrated with IAF's Sukhoi-30MKI jets. The missile system, with a strike range of 1,000-2,000 km and speeds that can reach Mach 5, is designed to penetrate underground bunkers, hardened military installations and even nuclear facilities. At such velocity, intercepting this missile with existing air-defence systems becomes extremely difficult. This makes it significantly faster than India's BrahMos cruise missile, which travels at Mach 3 and is widely regarded as the world's fastest operational supersonic cruise missile.

Talks may also happen on buying Israel's Iron Beam 100-kW-class laser weapon system, which will bolster India's air defences against drones and missiles. Iron Beam is also cost-effective as a 100-kW laser weapon costs just \$2 per shot.

Another big announcement expected is the establishment of a security alliance; Israeli PM Netanyahu recently told his cabinet that he envisaged India as part of a "hexagon of alliances" around the Middle East that would also include "Arab nations, African nations, Mediterranean nations — Greece and Cyprus — and nations in Asia." The intention, he said, is to unite against what he called "the radical axes" of Islam, including the version he sees as represented by Iran's regime.

We are winning so much: Trump in State of the Union address

WASHINGTON, Feb 25 (AP)

PRESIDENT Donald Trump declared during Tuesday's marathon State of the Union that "we're winning so much," saying he'd sparked a jobs and manufacturing boom at home while imposing a new world order abroad - hoping that offering a long list of his accomplishments can counter approval ratings that have been falling.

His main objective was convincing increasingly wary Americans that the economy is stronger than many believe, and that they should vote for more of the same by backing Republicans during November's



US President Donald Trump delivers the State of the Union address on Tuesday. (AP/PTI)

midterm elections. In the process, he shattered his own record, going longer than the 100-minute speech he gave before a joint session of Congress last year.

Trump tried at points to appeal to bipartisan patriotic sentiments, introducing a series of surprise guests that included US military heroes; a former political prisoner released after his administration toppled Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro; and the Olympic gold-medal-winning US men's hockey team. "Our country is winning again. In fact, we're winning so much that we really don't know what to do about it. People

are asking me, 'Please, please, please, Mister President, we're winning too much. We can't take it anymore.'" Trump said before introducing the team.

The hockey players, wearing their medals and sweaters that said "USA" in large letters, drew a bipartisan standing ovation. Trump pointed to the Democratic side of the chamber and quipped, "That's the first time I've ever seen them get up."

In another made-for-TV moment, Trump announced he would be awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honour, to the hockey team's

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US announces 126 pc duty on imports of certain Indian solar goods

NEW DELHI, Feb 25 (PTI)

THE US has announced a preliminary countervailing duty of 125.87 pc on imports of certain Indian solar goods, alleging that the products are unfairly subsidised by New Delhi.

"On February 24, 2026, the US Department of Commerce announced its preliminary affirmative determinations in the countervailing duty investigations of crystalline silicon

photovoltaic cells, whether or not assembled into solar cells, from India, Indonesia, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos)," a US order has said. These duties are over and above the 10 per cent tariffs announced by the Donald Trump administration on all countries from February 24.

Solar imports from India into the US increased to USD 792.6 million in 2024 from USD 83.86 million in 2022.