

2,500 US Marines arrive as Iran Speaker warns US troops will be SET ON FIRE

DUBAI, Mar 29 (Agencies)

AROUND 2,500 US Marines arrived in the region and more American forces are reaching the Middle East, US Central Command announced on Sunday.

As the US Marines arrived in the region, Iran Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf warned the US against a ground invasion, saying American troops would be set 'on fire.' He also threatened severe retaliation against American troops and allies in the region if US forces alight on Iranian soil.

Iranian forces "are waiting for the arrival of American troops on the ground to set them on fire and punish their regional partners forever," Iran Parliament



Representative pic

Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said on Sunday.

"Our firing continues. Our missiles are in place. Our determination and faith have increased," Qalibaf said.

He described the US' 15-point plan which Pakistan passed to Iran last week as 'their wishes'

and said the Trump administration is attempting to gain through the plan what it has failed to achieve by force. "As long as the Americans seek Iran's surrender, our response is clear: Our forces are ready, and we will never be humiliated," he said.

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IRGC claims downing of US F-16, MQ-9 drone

TEHRAN, Mar 29 (IANS)

IRAN'S Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed its air defence has struck a US F-16 Fighting Falcon and an MQ-9 Reaper drone in the country's southern airspace.

IRGC said the US fighter jet and drone were hit during joint retaliatory missile and drone operations by its Navy and Aerospace Division against heavy industries belonging to the United States and Israel.

It added that the US Central Command (CENTCOM) has also



confessed that its F-16 Fighting Falcon was targeted.

In a post on social media platform X, CENTCOM said, "A US Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon lands at a base in the Middle East after a combat flight in support of Operation Epic Fury."



IRGC said that it destroyed a Ukrainian anti-drone equipment depot in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, used to assist US forces.

Ebrahim Zolfaghari, spokesman for Iran's main military command Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters,

said that a warehouse in Dubai containing Ukrainian anti-drone systems and housing 21 Ukrainians had been targeted and destroyed in a joint operation by the IRGC's Air Force and Navy. Ukraine's Foreign Ministry spokesman Heorhiy Tykhyi denied the information as 'a lie', the Interfax-Ukraine news agency reported. "This information does not correspond to reality. It is fake," Interfax-Ukraine also quoted a spokesperson for Rustem Umerov, secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, as saying.

'Over 10,000 Maoists laid down arms in last decade'

Deadline to eliminate Naxalism from the country is March 31, 2026

NEW DELHI, Mar 29 (PTI)

A COMBINATION of security pressure and rehabilitation efforts has given a deadly blow to Naxalism, one of the country's longest-running insurgencies, with more than 10,000 Maoists laying down arms in the last decade and top leadership eliminated, officials said.

The Union Home Ministry had set the deadline to eliminate Naxalism from the country as March 31.

In 2025, 2,300 Maoists laid down arms, and more than 630 cadres chose mainstream life over armed rebellion in the first three months of 2026, official data on LWE surrenders from 2014 to early 2026 show.

According to an official, the Government has adopted a unified, multi-dimensional and decisive strategy against Naxalism, replacing the scattered approach of previous Governments.

An example is the road



entrenchment in the "Red Corridor", an arc that once stretched from "Pashupati to Tirupati" across Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, and parts of Andhra Pradesh, where contractors refused to work.

The Centre tasked the Border Roads Organisation with building roads in People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) core areas, involving the construction of five key roads and six crucial bridges in these hotbeds of the insur-

gency.

More than 15,000 kilometres of roads have been constructed in Communist Party of India (Maoist) affected areas, of which 12,250 kilometres have been completed in the last 10 years alone, the officials said.

Fortified police stations increased from 66 in 2014 to 586 constructed in the last 10 years in areas where the insurgents, termed as "gravest internal security challenge", once called shots.

LS to discuss Govt's efforts to end Naxal problem today

NEW DELHI, Mar 29 (PTI)

THE Lok Sabha will discuss efforts to free the country from Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) on Monday, a day before the Government's March 31 deadline to eliminate Naxalism ends. The Lok Sabha Secretariat has listed the discussion on "efforts to free the country from Left-Wing Extremism" for Monday under Rule 193, which does not entail voting. The short-duration discussion under the rule requires a reply by the Government.

The discussion will be
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Airlines to offer 60% seats in flights without addl charges from April 20

NEW DELHI, Mar 29 (PTI)

AIRLINES will start offering at least 60 per cent of seats in a flight without levying any additional charge from April 20, as well as maintain a transparent seat allocation policy, according to aviation watchdog the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

On March 18, the Civil Aviation Ministry announced that directions have been issued to the DGCA to direct airlines to allocate a minimum of 60 per cent of seats for selection on any flight free of charge to ensure fair access for passengers.

In this regard, the DGCA issued the amended Air Transport Circular dated March 20.

A DGCA official said the circular would come into effect from April 20.

The regulator has said that air-



lines should ensure at least "60 per cent of the seats in any flight shall be offered free of charge".

"Airlines should maintain transparent seat allocation policies and clearly communicate the availability of free seats and applicable conditions on their booking interfaces," as per a revised circular dated March 20.

Also, the regulator has said that

passengers travelling on the same PNR (Passenger Name Record) should, as far as practicable, be allotted seats in close proximity to one another, ordinarily meaning adjacent seats in the same row.

An official said airlines are preparing to implement the new directive.

At present, 20 per cent of the

seats can be booked free of charge, while the rest are paid.

Generally, airlines charge Rs 200 to Rs 2,100 for choosing seats, depending on various factors, including front rows and extra leg room, a travel industry executive had said.

Among other aspects, the circular has mentioned that all relevant charges for optional services relating to sports equipment or musical instruments, including any liability conditions in case of damage, should be displayed in a transparent and unambiguous manner on airline websites and booking platforms.

DGCA has said the circular will take effect 30 days from its issuance date.

The move also comes against the backdrop of rising concerns that airlines are levying high charges for various services, including seat selection.

Saudi, Egypt and Turkiye Foreign Ministers in Pakistan to discuss West Asia tensions

■ By Sajjad Hussain
ISLAMABAD, Mar 29 (PTI)

FOREIGN Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkiye are in Pakistan on Sunday to attend a two-day quadrilateral summit organised to find a way to de-escalate the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan arrived in Islamabad on Saturday, while their Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud reached here on Sunday at the invitation of Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. The summit is Pakistan's attempt to broker peace in West Asia.

Dar held bilateral talks with his counterparts from Egypt and Turkiye on Sunday on the sidelines of the summit. He is expected to hold talks with his Saudi counterpart separately as well.

The visiting Foreign Ministers will hold "in-depth discussions on a range of issues, including efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region: Ishaq Dar

During the visit, the leaders will hold consultations on regional developments and also call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the FO added.

In a press statement on Saturday, the FO said the visiting Foreign Ministers will hold "in-depth discussions on a range of issues, including efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region".

Separately, the FO in a mid-night post on X said that Dar held a telephonic conversation with Iran Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and "discussed the evolving regional situation and ongoing developments".

Dar said that he emphasised the need for de-escalation, stressing that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable path for lasting peace. In a related development, Dar announced Iran agreed to allow 20 more ships under the Pakistani flag to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran controls the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route through which the world's 20 per cent of energy is transported. Since the conflict, very few ships are allowed by Iran to cross it.

"I am pleased to share a great news that the Government of Iran has agreed to allow 20 more ships under the Pakistani flag to pass through the Strait of Hormuz; two ships will cross the Strait daily," he said.

"This is a welcome and constructive gesture by Iran and deserves appreciation. It is a harbinger of peace and will help usher stability in the region," he added.

Lankan President thanks Modi for fuel shipment

COLOMBO, Mar 29 (PTI)

SRI Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Sunday thanked Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for sending an oil shipment to ease the fuel supply disruptions in the Island nation caused by the West Asia conflict.

A shipment of 38,000 MT of fuel, comprising 20,000 MT of diesel and 18,000 MT of petrol, arrived in Colombo on Saturday, as an emergency support through the local operation of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Lanka IOC (LIOC).

“Spoke with PM @narendramodi a few days ago about the fuel supply disruptions Sri Lanka is facing due to the Middle East conflict. Grateful for India’s swift support. 38,000 MT of fuel arrived in Colombo yesterday,” Dissanayake posted on social

media.

The Sri Lankan President also thanked External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for his support.

“My thanks also to EAM @DrSJaishankar for his close coordination”, he said. Earlier, Sri Lanka also held talks with Jaishankar to seek assistance on energy sustainability in view of the volatile situation in West Asia.

The LIOC had requested rescue supplies from India after encountering problems in securing fuel from their Middle Eastern and Singapore suppliers.

Since March 15, Sri Lanka has imposed a quota for fuel to avoid long queues formed by hoarders.

Several who had hoarded fuel were charged in courts in different parts of the country.

The energy ministry had confirmed the availability of fuel until the end of May.

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