

Netanyahu intensifies allegations of election fraud by Arab-led parties

TEL AVIV, Oct 29 (PTI)

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday intensified allegations of election fraud by Arab-led parties, describing suspected foreign interference as an "earthquake", as the top electoral body asked the internal security agency to investigate the matter.

In a social media post, Netanyahu cited Central Elections Committee chief Justice Noam Sohlberg's decision to ask Shin Bet chief David Zini to investigate suspicions of foreign funding and improper influence in Tuesday's election. "The Ra'am gate affair is an earthquake. They stole the elections in Israel!" the 77-year-old premier wrote, targeting the Arab-led Ra'am (the United Arab List) and the Joint List alliance.

He alleged that foreign entities had interfered in Tuesday's parliamentary elections and bribed voters in favour of Arab-led parties. The allegations come amid an inconclusive election in which neither Netanyahu's bloc nor the opposition camp led by former military chief Gadi Eisenkot secured a majority in the Knesset, Israel's Parliament.

According to the latest partial count, Netanyahu's bloc had 53 seats against 48 for Eisenkot's camp, while Arab-led parties were projected to win 19 seats.

At least 61 seats are required for a majority in the 120-member

ber Knesset.

The Arab-led parties primarily represent Palestinian citizens of Israel, who account for about a fifth of the country's population. Ra'am, led by Mansour Abbas, and the Joint List have been projected to hold a potentially influential position in Government formation.

Ra'am had previously joined the coalition formed in 2021 under then-Prime Minister Naftali

Bennett and Yair Lapid.

That Government collapsed in 2022, resulting in another election. Meanwhile, President Isaac Herzog on Thursday called for a thorough investigation into the allegations, while cau-



tioning against casting suspicion on an entire community that had sought to exercise its right to vote. He said that he had spoken to Sohlberg and Zini and was closely following developments in the investigation.

"The integrity of our elections is a supreme democratic value. The evidence and the allegations must be fully investigated, and those responsible must be arrested and held accountable according to the full extent of the law," Herzog said.

Herzog said he would meet representatives of all Knesset factions after receiving the official results and urged political leaders to consider what was best for the country during consultations on Government formation.

N Korea fires nearly dozen ballistic missiles after S Korea's dialogue offer



SEOUL, Oct 29 (IANS)

NORTH Korea fired about a dozen short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea on Thursday, the South Korean military said, in an apparent cold rebuff to Seoul's offer for talks aimed at easing border tensions sparked by a recent land mine blast.

The missiles were launched from the Wonsan area on the North's east coast at around 12:30 pm and flew about 250 kilometres, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said, adding that further analysis of other specifications was under way in coordination with the United States, Yonhap News Agency reported.

The latest launch came about a week after Seoul proposed holding military talks with Pyongyang to resolve discrepancies in their border demarcations, as tensions have heightened since the September 21 land mine blast that injured three South Korean soldiers.

The explosion occurred at a time when the South Korean military was looking into the North's potential breaches of the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) as it fortifies its border by building fences and laying land mines.

India votes in favour of UNGA resolution calling for end to US embargo on Cuba

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 29 (PTI)

INDIA voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution calling for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the US against Cuba, reiterating that the restrictions should be lifted to help the Caribbean nation pursue its development aspirations.

The 193-member General Assembly adopted the resolution on Wednesday with 130



Soumya Nair

countries voting in favour, 17 against and 25 abstaining.

Delivering India's statement, Counsellor at India's Permanent Mission to the UN Soumya Nair said the General Assembly has repeatedly called for an end to the embargo and rejected laws and regulations with extraterritorial effects that adversely affect the sovereignty of other states and the progress and prosperity of their peoples.

"India reiterates the Assembly's call to all states to refrain from promulgating and applying, and

to repeal and invalidate, such laws and measures in conformity with their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law," she said.

Nair said India's commitment to multilateralism is rooted in the belief that international challenges are best addressed through dialogue and diplomacy, in accordance with the UN Charter. "It is in this spirit that India hopes that the embargo
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'India ready to share battle-tested anti-terror expertise with ASEAN'

NEW DELHI, Oct 29 (PTI)

INDIA is ready to share its "battle-tested" counter-terror expertise with ASEAN and its dialogue partners, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday as he described Operation Sindoor as a declaration of New Delhi's clear approach against state-sponsored terrorist activities. The Defence Minister also said that India supports an Indo-Pacific that is secure and resilient -- one where peace and stability are not merely aspirations, but the outcome of collective efforts.

In an address at a conclave of Defence Ministers of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member States and the bloc's dialogue partners in Cebu in the Philippines, he flagged



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addresses the 13th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) - Plus, in Cebu, Philippines. (PTI)

concerns over disruptions in certain maritime trade routes and asserted that India will contin-

ue to act as a "trusted net security provider" in the Indian Ocean region and the wider Indo-

Pacific. "Today, when global trade routes are facing new types of international threats, merely issuing statements on maritime security is not enough," he said at the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) conclave. However, what drew more attention was Singh's call for concerted efforts to combat terrorism. "India is fully prepared to share its practical and battle-tested counter-terrorism expertise with ADMM-Plus partners," he said.

"Through joint military exercises, capacity-building programmes, and robust intelligence sharing, we can further strengthen our collective capabilities," he added.

The Defence Minister said that
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5 compulsory subjects, optional skill paper as safety net

CBSE scheme for 2028 Class 10 exams

NEW DELHI, Oct 29 (PTI)

THE CBSE on Thursday clarified the structure for its 2028 Class 10 board exams, where students will have five compulsory subjects with the option of an additional skill paper, which can help them clear the examination even if they fail in mathematics, science or social science.

The board also clarified that interdisciplinary area and CT and AI modules will not be included in its Scheme of Studies.

The clarification applies specifically to students studying

in Class 9 in 2026-27, who will appear for their Class 10 board examination in 2028. It does not affect the current Class 10 batch.

"To align the introduction of this curricular area with the implementation schedule, the subject 'Individuals in Society' and the 'Modules of CT and AI' in Class 9 (2026-27) and the subject 'Environmental Education' in Class 10 (2027-28) shall not be part of the curriculum for these batches," Praggya M Singh,

Director (Academics), CBSE, said in a communique to school principals. "Vocational education shall continue to be a compulsory curricular area for students of Class 10 (2028 batch). To fulfil this requirement, students may opt for either the subject 'Kaushal Vikas' or any one of the 22 skill subjects notified by the board," she said.

Clarifying the examination structure, the CBSE outlined two pathways for vocational educa-

tion, allowing students to choose between school-based assessment and a board examination leading to a nationally recognised skill certification.

The circular is intended to provide clarity to the current batch of Class 9 students.

"Our foremost priority is to safeguard students' interests by clearly communicating the academic and examination-related provisions well in advance. The emphasis is on encouraging students to focus on meaningful learning rather than solely on examinations," a source said.

Pak, China ink deal to operationalise crossing that connects PoK with China

ISLAMABAD, Oct 29 (PTI)

PAKISTAN and China signed a deal on Thursday to fast-track the movement of selected agricultural goods through the Sost-Khunjerab border crossing.

The crossing connects Pakistan-occupied Kashmir with China's Xinjiang.

The agreement was signed online between the customs administrations of the two countries at the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), according to an official statement.

The Pakistani delegation was led by Member Customs (Operations) Syed Shakeel Shah, while the Chinese delegation was headed by Li Qinghua, deputy head of Urumqi Customs and director of Tashkurgan Customs.

The agreement aims to establish a green channel for an agreed list of agricultural products, allowing eligible consignments to undergo priority processing and examination while maintaining risk-based customs controls, the statement said.

It provides for enhanced information sharing and the exchange of risk alerts between the two customs administrations to strengthen coordination and improve cross-border trade management.

The agreement also provides for enhanced exchange of information and risk alerts between the two customs administrations to strengthen coordination and improve the management of cross-border trade.

CCS clears ₹40,000cr warships proposal

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has cleared a project to build eight next-generation corvettes at a cost of around Rs 40,000 crore for the Indian Navy.

“The contract for eight warships would be signed in the next few days with Garden Reach Shipbuilders, Kolkata

and Goa Shipyard Limited,” a top official said.

The Navy may get the first warship of the eight by 2030. Corvettes are small warships that typically displace between 1,000 and 3,000 tonnes and achieve top speeds between 25 to 30 knots (nautical miles per hour). TNN AND AGENCIES

A new 'spring' in ties: EU aims mid-2027 FTA rollout

Modi May Visit Brussels In Dec: EU Lawmaker

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Lawmaker David McAllister said EU would particularly welcome progress on the investment protection agreement as it would strengthen the confidence of European investors in the Indian market

New Delhi: The European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee Chair, David McAllister, has said that the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is expected to be signed by mid-Dec, with PM Narendra Modi anticipated to travel to Brussels for the official signing ceremony.

The "mother of all deals" will still undergo rigorous scrutiny by the European Parliament, but McAllister told TOI in an exclusive interview he's confident about smooth ratification, given the benefits it will bring to both sides. The EU lawmaker said that a consent vote is expected by spring next year, paving the way for the trade agreement to officially enter into force mid-2027.

"We expect the FTA to be signed by mid-Dec. Hopefully, PM Modi will manage to visit Brussels and attend the official signing ceremony," said McAllister, who led an EU Parliamentary delegation to India this week.

"Though Parliament cannot amend the text of the agreement, our consent is required before it enters into force. I followed the debate in the European Parliament over the past months, and I can say there seems to be a broad majority support for this landmark FTA. The benefits for both sides are so huge that I'm sure the European Parliament will give its support in the consent vote," added the EU lawmaker, who heads the par-

liamentary committee that shapes and monitors the EU's common foreign and security policy.

McAllister also said the EU would particularly welcome progress on the investment protection agreement as it would strengthen the confidence of European investors in the Indian market, encouraging greater European investments and contributing to job creation in India. He said the FTA would allow India and the EU to work more closely on de-risking supply chains and reducing dependencies.

If the FTA indeed is ready for signing by mid-Dec, Modi is likely to stop over in Brussels to ink the deal on his way back to India from the US G20 summit.

The PM will also travel to Canada and possibly to Germany during that trip.

Asked about the prospects of defence-industrial collaboration and technology sharing under the new India-EU defence and security partnership, McAllister backed closer cooperation between India and the European defence industry, saying it is in the interest of both sides.

He also spoke about the convergence of interest in keeping the Indo-Pacific free and open and the need to reduce reliance on any one country.

"There are many fields of cooperation in this matter. I would definitely mention information sharing, research cooperation

and cybersecurity. One element would be that we also invite India to participate in a closer cooperation with our European defence industry, because here we also have a joint interest," said the lawmaker.

"We in Europe, as part of our strategic sovereignty, want to reduce the dependence on one particular country, and I understand that the debate in India is very similar. You also want to step-by-step reduce your dependence, and I think this is a very good win-win situation for both sides," said McAllister.

Asked about India's position on the Russia-Ukraine war, McAllister welcomed Modi govt's diplomatic efforts to achieve a ceasefire covering energy infrastructure, Black Sea shipping, and movement of grain.

"Any peace agreement must be just, sustainable and acceptable to both sides. It must also include absolute, concrete security guarantees for Ukraine that Putin (Russian president) is not able to repeat this unbelievable act of aggression and violation of international law.

So, if India with its special relationship with Russia — and also India with its constructive relationship with Ukraine — can play any kind of role constructively, it would be welcome," he said, while praising external affairs minister S Jaishankar's "constructive" role for peace.