

Israel retakes Gaza border areas as toll crosses 3,000

Agence France-Presse

GAZA CITY/JERUSALEM

Israel said it recaptured Gaza border areas from Hamas militants as the war's death toll passed 3,000 on Tuesday, the fourth day of fierce fighting since the Islamists launched a surprise attack.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned Israel's military campaign was only the start of a sustained war to destroy Hamas and "change the Middle East".

Fears of a regional conflagration have surged amid expectations of a looming Israeli ground incursion into Gaza.

The death toll in Israel has surged above 900 from the worst attack in the country's 75-year history, while Gaza officials have reported 765 people killed so far.

Hamas gunmen killed more than 100 people in the kibbutz of Beerli alone,



The aftermath: Palestinians walk by the rubble of a building after it was struck by an Israeli airstrike, in Gaza City on Sunday. AP

said Moti Bukjin, a volunteer with the charity Zaka.

The military said its forces had largely reclaimed the embattled south and the border around Gaza and dislodged holdout Hamas fighters from more than a dozen towns and kibbutzim.

"Around 1,500 bodies of Hamas (fighters) have been found in Israel around the Gaza Strip," said army spokesman Richard Hecht.

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Modi speaks to Netanyahu

NEW DELHI

India "unequivocally" condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday, soon after he held a telephone conversation with Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "I thank Prime Minister Netanyahu for his phone call and providing an update on the ongoing situation," Mr. Modi posted on X (formerly Twitter).

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Modi speaks to Netanyahu, condemns attack on Israel

People of India stand firmly with Israel in this difficult hour, says PM; Netanyahu also spoke to U.S. President Joe Biden; Israeli PM says that they did not want this war and it was forced upon them

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India "unequivocally" condemns terrorism that hit Israel on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday.

This was Mr. Modi's second remark on the conflict which came soon after he held a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as Israel intensified assaults on Gaza Strip.

"I thank Prime Minister Netanyahu for his phone call and providing an update on the ongoing situation. People of India stand firmly with Israel in this difficult hour. India strongly and unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations," said Mr. Modi in his remark on microblogging site X (formerly Twitter).

Called other leaders

Mr. Netanyahu called a number of world leaders, including U.S. President Joe Biden, as the Israeli Air



Narendra Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during an event in Tel Aviv in 2021. PTI

Force aircraft dropped bombs on targets in Gaza.

The attack was formally announced on Tuesday by Foreign Minister of Israel Eli Cohen in a globally telecast press conference in which he said Israel would fight a long war to defeat terrorism.

Ahead of calling Mr. Modi, Mr. Netanyahu repeated Mr. Cohen's remarks

and said Israel would win the war against terrorism.

"We did not want this war. It was forced upon us in the most brutal and savage way. Though Israel did not start this war, Israel will finish it. Once, the Jewish people were stateless. Once, the Jewish people were defenseless. No longer," said the Israel Prime Minister.

India can play role to defuse crisis: envoy of Palestine

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Palestine Ambassador Adnan Abu Alhaija said on Tuesday that India's solidarity with the Palestinian cause dates back to Mahatma Gandhi's time and its rising global stature and influence over all key players in West Asia make it well-placed to play a crucial role in defusing the crisis arising out of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

In an interview to PTI, Mr. Alhaija particularly noted that India is a "friend" for both Israel and Palestine and it is "qualified" to work towards bringing down the tensions and contribute towards a solution to the Palestine issue.

First test flight of Gaganyaan mission scheduled on Oct. 21

The exercise is intended to test the 'crew module'; it involves launching the unit to outer space, bringing it back to earth and recovering it after touchdown in the Bay of Bengal

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will execute the first of multiple test flights ahead of the Gaganyaan mission – India's first manned mission to space – on October 21, Jitendra Singh, Minister of State for Space, Science and Technology, said on Tuesday.

The test will be conducted at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota and is intended to test the 'crew module' or the part of vehicle where the Indian astronauts will be housed.

The test involves launching the module to outer space and bringing it back to earth and recovering it after touchdown in the Bay of Bengal. The Navy personnel have already started mock operations to recover the module, said Mr. Singh. Along with the



The preparations for the flight TV-D1 are under way as the ISRO is about to commence unmanned tests for the Gaganyaan Mission. ANI

crew module, there will also be a 'crew escape' system. If the spacecraft while ascending into space faces a problem, this escape system is expected to separate and bring the crew safely back to sea from where they will be picked by the Navy personnel.

In the first of this tests called, Test Vehicle Abort Mission (TV-D1), the module will be identical to the one deployed to space, ex-

cept that it will be 'unpressurised.'

Crew Escape Systems

The TV-D1 test vehicle is a single-stage liquid-fuelled rocket developed for this abort mission. "The payloads consist of the Crew Module [CM] and Crew Escape Systems [CES] and will simulate the abort condition during the ascent trajectory corresponding to a Mach number of 1.2 [1

mach is 330 metres per second, or the speed of sound] expected in the Gaganyaan mission. CES with CM will be separated from the Test Vehicle at an altitude of about 17 km. Subsequently, the abort sequence will be executed autonomously commencing with the separation of CES and deployment of the series of parachutes, finally culminating in the safe touchdown of CM in the sea, about 10 km from the coast of Sriharikota," the ISRO said in a statement.

The success of this test will set the stage for the first unmanned "Gaganyaan" mission and ultimately manned mission to outer space in low earth orbit, said Mr. Singh. "Before the ultimate manned "Gaganyaan" mission, there will be a test flight next year, which will carry "Vyommitra", the female robot astronaut," he added.

New scheme to settle commercial tax dues



As a special offer, interest accrued by traders till they pay dues will be waived, CM said. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

New scheme to settle commercial tax dues

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

With commercial tax dues to the State government touching ₹25,000 crore, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday announced a Samadhan Scheme to help traders settle their dues, penalty and interest.

The scheme will be in force between October 16, 2023 and February 15, 2024. The government has come out with different payment options for five categories of traders, depending on the size of their dues.

Making a *suo motu* statement in the Assembly, Mr. Stalin said over 2.11 lakh cases involving over 2.41 lakh traders and commercial establishments were

pending in court.

"The cases have become a burden on officials, and have caused hardship to traders and financial loss to the government," he said, explaining the reason for coming up with the scheme.

As per the scheme, traders whose dues are below ₹50,000, including taxes, interest and penalty, are eligible for a complete waiver.

"This is the first time in Tamil Nadu that the taxes to be paid by small traders are fully waived. A total of 95,502 small traders will benefit from the scheme," he said.

Other traders are divided into four categories.

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Traders whose dues are between ₹50,000 and ₹10 lakh need to pay a flat 20% of their dues in a single instalment. Those who have accepted the tax assessment could pay 66% of their dues, 10% interest and 10% penalty. Traders who have gone on appeal or filed cases can get them settled by paying 33% of their dues, 10% interest and 10% penalty. If they have no tax dues, but have penalty and interest dues, they can avail themselves of the scheme by paying 10% interest and 10% penalty.

This payment option is also applicable to the category of traders whose dues are in the ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore range. But they are not eligible for the flat rate of payment. There is a different payment option for traders whose dues are between ₹1 crore and ₹10 crore. Those who have accepted the tax assessment can pay 75% of their dues, 15% penalty and 20% interest. Traders who have filed an appeal have been given the option of paying 50% of their dues, 20% interest and 15% penalty. If the traders had already paid the tax but not the penalty and interest, they can settle it by paying 15% penalty and 20% interest.

In the case of traders whose dues are more than ₹10 crore, they have to pay 90% of their dues, 15% penalty and 30% interest if they have accepted the tax assessment. Traders who have gone on appeal or filed cases could settle them by paying 60% of their dues, 15% penalty and 30% interest.

The Chief Minister said that as a special offer, the interest accrued by the traders till they pay their dues will be waived.

What is Hamas, the Palestinian militant group?

NEWS ANALYSIS

Stanly Johny

"We have decided to put an end to all of the occupation's crimes. The time is over for them [Israel] to [continue to] act without accountability," said Mohammad Deif, the shadowy commander of al-Qasam Brigades, Hamas's military wing, on October 7. His audio statement was telecast on TV after Hamas launched an unprecedented attack that caught Israel by surprise. "Thus, we announce the 'al-Aqsa Flood' operation," he said. The rest is history. Hamas carried out its largest attack on Israel from Gaza, killing at least 900 people and leaving the bloodiest blow to Israel in decades. In response, Israel has declared war on the outfit, killed over 700 Gazans in air strike and is preparing for a major ground offensive. The Palestine issue is back to the fore of the West Asian cauldron.

The roots

The roots of Hamas go back to the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood, established by Egyptian Islamist Hasan al-Banna in 1928, made a presence in the British-ruled Palestine in the 1930s. Its focus had been on reorienting Muslim society, while the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), founded in 1964, championed the Palestinian nationalist sentiments.

The Brotherhood's approach was that the time for "jihad" had not come yet and they should first rebuild a stronger, pious Islamic society – they called it "the upbringing of an Islamic generation". During this time, Israel established



Bargaining chip: Palestinians transport a captured Israeli civilian, centre, into the Gaza Strip on Saturday. AP

contacts with the Brotherhood leadership in the occupied territories. Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the physically challenged, half-blind cleric of the Brotherhood, established al-Mujamma' al-Islam (The Islamic Centre) in 1973. Israel recognised the Centre first as a charity and then as an association, which allowed Yassin to raise funds, build mosques and set up educational institutions, including the Islamic University of Gaza. But the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran changed the landscape of Islamist politics across West Asia. Islamist organisations, having witnessed the political success of the Mullahs in Iran, started becoming politically more ambitious and active.

The rise

Hamas was established after the first intifada broke out in 1987. The occupied territories were swept by a mass uprising. The Brotherhood found it an opportunity to enter the struggle against the occupation.

On December 14, the Brotherhood, under the leadership of Yassin, issued a leaflet, asking Palestinians to stand up to the Israeli occupation. In January, they issued another leaflet under the name Ha-

rakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (the Islamic Resistance Movement) – in short, Hamas, which means "zeal" in Arabic. In 1989, Hamas launched its first attack, abducting and killing two Israeli soldiers.

Unlike the PLO, which was modelled around the leftist guerilla national movements in the third world, Hamas had a completely different vision. The charter it issued on August 19, 1988 was studied with anti-Semitic remarks. According to the charter, Palestine is "an Islamic Waqf land consecrated for Moslem generations until Judgement Day"; "there is no solution to the Palestine problem except jihad" and all peace initiatives are a "waste of time and acts of absurdity". It opposed the Oslo agreement, which allowed the formation of the Palestinian Authority. When the PLO recognised Israel, Hamas rejected the two-state solution and vowed to liberate the whole of Palestine "from the [Jordan] River to the [Mediterranean] Sea".

The evolution

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Hamas conducted several suicide attacks, targeting Israelis. In 2000,

when the second intifada broke out, Hamas was in the driving seat. Israel had taken a policy of targeted assassinations. In March 2004, Israel killed Sheikh Yassin with a helicopter-fired missile in Gaza city. Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, Yassin's successor, was killed in April 2004. Khaled Meshal, another top leader survived an attempt on his life by Mossad in Jordan. Hamas continued to remain defiant, targeting Israeli troops and settlers. In 2005, faced with Hamas's violent resistance, Israel unilaterally decided to pull out of Gaza.

Hamas's violent tactics and Israel's collective punishment of Palestinians in return seemed to have helped the Islamists gain popularity. In the 2006 legislative elections in the Palestinian territory, Hamas won 74 out of the 132 seats, while the Fatah party, the PLO's backbone, got only 45 seats. In its election manifesto, Hamas showed, for the first time, signs of moderation. It dropped the call for the destruction of Israel, which was mentioned in the 1988 charter, and said its first priority was to change the situation for Palestinians.

Hamas formed the government, but faced opposition from Israel and most international powers. As tensions rose between Fatah and Hamas in the West Bank, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas dissolved the Hamas government. This led to violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas. Fatah ousted Hamas from the West Bank and Hamas ousted the former from Gaza in 2007. Since then, Hamas is the government in Gaza.

While Hamas never gave up its right to armed resistance, the organisation sig-

nalled changes in its outlook over the years. It still refuses to recognise Israel but offered hudna (a lasting ceasefire) if Israel returned to the 1967 border. In 2017, it adopted a new charter from which the anti-Semitic remarks of the original charter were expunged. The new document stated Hamas is not seeking war with the Jewish people – but with Zionism that drives the occupation of Palestine. "Hamas advocates the liberation of all of Palestine but is ready to support the state on 1967 borders without recognising Israel or ceding any rights," it said. But Saturday's attack, which indiscriminately targeted both Israeli troops and civilians, suggests that Hamas has returned to its original tactics.

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to destroy the enemy. Israeli retaliation would "reverberate" across West Asia, he thunders. But Israel will have to factor in two realities when it sets the goals of its military operation. Hamas may not have the capability to push Israel back to the 1967 border. But the Islamist group has emerged as the main pillar of Palestine's political landscape, which in the past had largely been driven by secular nationalism. A solution to the Israel-Palestine problem cannot be reached without taking Hamas into consideration – unless Hamas is totally destroyed.

Two, Hamas survives. Over the years, Hamas has lost most of its founding leaders, it has been categorised as a terrorist outfit and faced Israeli attacks frequently. But it survived, to fight another day. This is Mr. Netanyahu's biggest test this time.

IMF raises India's FY24 GDP growth forecast to 6.3%

Global lender sees retail inflation in the South Asian nation quickening to 5.5% in 2023/24 before easing to 4.6% in 2024/25; Fund cuts its economic growth forecasts for China and the euro area

Reuters
MUMBAI

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday raised India's economic growth forecast for the current fiscal year to 6.3%, from 6.1% earlier.

The IMF expects retail inflation in the South Asian nation to quicken to 5.5% in 2023/24 before easing to 4.6% in 2024/25.

"Growth in India is projected to remain strong, at 6.3% in both 2023 and 2024, with an upward revision of 0.2 percentage

Upbeat outlook

IMF on Tuesday released its World Economic Outlook in which it raised India's FY24 GDP growth forecast to 6.3%, from 6.1%

■ Fund's upward revision in forecast reflects the 'stronger-than-expected consumption' during April-June

■ IMF sees current account deficit remaining at 1.8% of GDP in FY24 and FY25

■ Lender retains its forecast for global GDP growth in 2023 at 3.0%



points for 2023, reflecting stronger-than-expected consumption during April-June," the IMF said.

The RBI has projected

CPI-based inflation for the current fiscal year at 5.4% while GDP growth is seen at 6.5%. Monetary policy projections are consistent

with achieving the Indian central bank's inflation target over the medium term, the IMF said. India's current account deficit is expected to remain at 1.8% of GDP in FY24 and FY25, the global lender added.

The Fund cut its growth forecasts for China and the euro area and said overall global growth remained low and uneven despite what it called the "remarkable strength" of the U.S. economy.

The IMF also left its forecast for global real GDP growth in 2023 unchanged at 3.0%.

Indian athletes will perform even better at the next Asian Games, asserts Modi

The PM assures all possible help to achieve greater heights; congratulates the women athletes who accounted for almost half the medals won in China

GENERAL

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

P rime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday assured all possible help to Indian athletes in their endeavour to achieve greater heights and expressed confidence that the country will better its Hangzhou performance in the next edition of the Asian Games.

The Indian athletes produced their best-ever performance at the continental games, bringing home 107 medals, including 28 gold as the country finished fourth on the medals table.

"The government will pull all stops to ensure the athletes get the best. You have crossed 100 medals. Next time, we will go way past this record. Put your best effort for the Paris (Olympics)," Modi said while felicitating the Asian Games contingent here on Tuesday.

No dearth of talent

"The athletes tried to give it their best shot. There was never a dearth of talent in India. The will to win was always there. They used to do well earlier as well, but there were a lot of hurdles which came in their way."

"Whatever event we



Grand reception: PM Modi with the hockey players at the felicitation function for Asian Games medal winners in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI



More than 3,000 athletes are getting training, coaching, medical and dietary assistance under Khelo India

MODI

competed in, we won medals. The canvas is growing, which is a good indication for India. You have opened new avenues, which will motivate the new generation. This (performance) will also give new motivation for the Pa-

ris Olympics," said Modi.

"Our women have given an amazing performance. They showcased the strength of women in the country. Half the medals won at the Asian Games were won by women. In track and field, I felt they were not willing to settle for anything less than a gold medal."

Khelo India effect

The PM also gave the thumbs up to the sports ministry's flagship programme, Khelo India, saying it had been a huge success.

"This Asian Games, 125

athletes were the products of the Khelo India programme and they won 40 medals. This shows that Khelo India is progressing in the right direction.

"More than 3,000 athletes are getting training, coaching, medical and dietary assistance under Khelo India. A total of ₹25,000 crore assistance is being given to athletes. Money will not come in the way of the athletes."

"Next five years, the government will spend an additional ₹3000 crore on athletes and more infrastructure will be created," said Modi.