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The Hindu & The Indian express

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India inks £350-mn deal with U.K. to buy missiles

As many as 64 Indian firms commit to invest £1.3 billion in the U.K.; Modi and the visiting U.K. PM Starmer agree on a £250-million deal to advance collaboration on electric engines for Naval ships

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India has signed a £350-million defence deal with the U.K. to buy missiles for the Indian Army, the British government said on Thursday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his U.K. counterpart, Keir Starmer, also agreed to take forward their collaboration on electric-powered engines for Naval ships, worth an initial £250 million.

In a separate release, the U.K. government said 64 Indian companies had so far committed to invest £1.3 billion (or ₹15,430 crore) in the U.K., a sign of the growing business confidence boosted by the India-U.K. trade deal.

The Indian government has not shared similar data



Building cooperation: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his British counterpart Keir Starmer in Mumbai on Thursday. PTI

on investment commitments by U.K. companies in India.

U.K. varsities in India
However, the U.K. government also said that the University of Lancaster and the University of Surrey had been given approval to open campuses in India to help meet booming de-

mand from Indian students.

The missile deal paves the way for a "broader complex weapons partnership" between the U.K. and India, which is currently under negotiation between the two governments, the U.K. government said in its statement.

"The contract is set to

'India-U.K. ties an important pillar of global stability'

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who welcomed his U.K. counterpart Keir Starmer on Thursday, said the India-U.K. partnership was an "important pillar of global stability" in the current turbulent global scenario. » **PAGE 14**

deliver U.K.-manufactured Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM) built in Belfast to the Indian Army, delivering on the Government's Plan for Change in another significant boost for the U.K. defence industry," it said.

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India inks £350-mn deal with U.K. to buy missiles

Source: The Hindu | Page: 1 | GS Paper: 2 – India-UK Relations

Key Points

1. India signed a £350-mn deal with the U.K. to buy Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM) for the Army.
2. Marks start of a "broader complex weapons partnership."
3. Both agreed on £250-mn collaboration for electric engines for naval ships.
4. 64 Indian firms to invest £1.3 bn (~₹15,430 cr) in the U.K.
5. Lancaster & Surrey Universities to open campuses in India.
6. PM Modi: ties are an "important pillar of global stability."



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Israel, Hamas agree to Trump-led ceasefire deal and hostage release

Israel says all parties have signed the first phase of the deal in Egypt; it follows a 20-point peace plan announced by Trump; Israel's Smotrich says he opposes the ceasefire; Hamas's disarmament to be addressed in second phase, says U.S. President

Agence France-Presse
SHARM EL SHEIKH

Israel and Hamas on Thursday agreed a Gaza ceasefire deal to free the remaining living hostages, in a major step towards ending a war that has killed tens of thousands of people and unleashed a humanitarian catastrophe. Israel said that all parties have signed the first phase of the deal, adding that the release of the captives would "bring the end to this war".

The agreement in Egypt follows a 20-point peace plan for Gaza announced last month by U.S. President Donald Trump, after more than two years of war sparked by Hamas's



Breath of relief: Palestinians celebrate following the peace deal announcement in Khan Younis on Thursday. AP

October 2023 attack on Israel.

U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said the American leader would travel to Egypt next week for an event celebrating the conclusion of the agreement, with Mr.

Trump himself saying: "I'm going to try and make a trip over... We're working on the timing, the exact timing."

Despite celebrations in Israel and Gaza and a flood of messages from world

leaders hailing the deal, numerous issues remain unsettled in the negotiations, including the plan's call for Hamas to disarm and a proposed interim "Board of Peace" led by Mr. Trump himself to oversee Gaza's administration.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan said the Palestinian Islamist movement rejected the planned transitional authority. "No Palestinian would accept this. All the factions, including the Palestinian Authority, reject this," Mr. Hamdan told Qatar-based broadcaster *Al Araby*.

Mr. Trump said the issue of Hamas surrendering its weapons would be addressed in the second phase of the peace plan.

A ceasefire was to take hold in Gaza within 24 hours of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convening his security Cabinet for a meeting.

However, Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said he opposed the Gaza ceasefire deal.

"The final draft of phase one was signed this morning in Egypt by all parties to release all the hostages," government spokesperson Shosh Bedrosian told presspersons.

A source within Hamas said the group would exchange 20 living hostages all at the same time for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners as part of the deal's first phase.

Israel, Hamas agree to Trump-led ceasefire deal and hostage release

Source: The Hindu | Page: 1 & 18 | GS Paper: 2
– West Asia

Key Points

1. Ceasefire Deal:

Israel and Hamas agreed to a Gaza ceasefire to free remaining living hostages – seen as a step toward ending the ongoing war.

2. Location & Mediation:

Agreement signed in Egypt, based on Donald Trump's 20-point peace plan for Gaza.

3. Hostage Exchange:

Hamas to release 20 Israeli hostages, while Israel to free around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.



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4. Next Steps:

Hamas disarmament and weapons surrender to be addressed in the second phase of the peace plan.

5. Unresolved Issues:

Many issues remain unsettled — including Hamas's disarmament and creation of an interim “Board of Peace” to administer Gaza.

Judicial officers with seven years' experience in Bar can become District Judges: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

In a bid to infuse young talent into the upper echelons of the district judiciary, a Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai on Thursday held that judicial officers with seven years in the Bar before their recruitment to the subordinate judicial service are entitled to be appointed as District or Additional District Judges.

District Judges are considered for appointment to the High Court. So far, only practising lawyers with seven years' experience were eligible for direct recruitment as District Judges. In-service judicial officers, even with seven years of



previous practice as advocates, were not considered, leading to lack of drive, which the court observed may be one of the reasons for pendency in lower courts.

Chief Justice Gavai reasoned that a lawyer does not cease to be one upon joining the judicial service.

The court noted that no eligibility criteria are prescribed under Article 233 (2) for a person already in

judicial service of the Union or the State for being appointed as District Judge. "A person who has been or who is in judicial service and has a combined experience of seven years or more as an advocate or a Judicial Officer would be eligible for being considered and appointed as a District Judge/Additional District Judge under Article 233 of the Constitution," the Bench held in its judgment.

Further, the Constitution Bench directed that the minimum age for being considered and appointed as a District Judge or Additional District Judge, both for advocates and judicial officers, would be 35 years as on the date of application.

Judicial officers with seven years' experience in Bar can become District Judges: SC

Source: The Hindu | Page: 14 | GS Paper: 2 – Polity (Judiciary)

Crisp Context:

1. Article 233(2):

Provides that a person not already in judicial service with at least seven years' practice as an advocate is eligible for appointment as a District Judge.

2. Earlier Condition:

Only practising advocates with seven years at the Bar were eligible for direct recruitment as District or Additional District Judges. In-service judicial officers could not count prior Bar experience for eligibility.

3. Supreme Court Judgment (CJI B.R. Gavai Bench):

- Judicial officers who had seven years' Bar practice before joining service are eligible to be appointed as District or Additional District Judges.
- Their combined experience (as advocate + judicial officer) will be considered.
- Minimum age: 35 years at the time of application.

Retrospective age limits under surrogacy law violate reproductive autonomy: SC

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

Observing that concerns over a couple's parenting abilities cannot be invoked retrospectively to restrict their reproductive choice, the Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that the age limits under the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, do not apply to couples who had frozen their embryos and initiated the surrogacy process before the law came into force on January 25, 2022.

A Bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and K.V. Viswanathan delivered concurring opinions while hearing applications filed by three couples who argued that they had created and preserved embryos long before the enactment of the 2021 law and were the-



Exemption will extend to cases where embryos were frozen before the Act came to effect.

refore, unfairly disqualified by the subsequent age limits.

Under the Act, an intending couple is eligible for surrogacy only if the woman is between 23 and 50 years of age and the man is between 26 and 55 years.

The petitioners contended that these limits

could not retrospectively disqualify those who had already completed the medical procedures culminating in embryo freezing.

Justice Nagarathna observed that the law should not draw a distinction between couples who conceive naturally and those who require medical assistance to do so.

The Bench clarified that it was not "questioning the wisdom of Parliament" in imposing age limits or examining the validity of those restrictions but was confined to the issue of their retrospective application.

It also held that the exemption would extend to cases where embryos were created and frozen before the commencement of the Act, even if implantation in the surrogate's womb had not yet taken place.

Retrospective age limits under surrogacy law violate reproductive autonomy: SC

Source: The Hindu | Page: 16 | GS Paper: 2 – Polity & Governance (Judiciary + Health Rights)

Judgment

- **SC ruled: Age limits under Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 can't apply retrospectively.**
- **Couples who froze embryos or began surrogacy before Jan 25, 2022 remain eligible.**
- **Court upheld reproductive autonomy as a fundamental right.**

Act Conditions:

- **Woman: 23-50 yrs**
- **Man: 26-55 yrs**
- **Applicable only to heterosexual married couples.**

India to launch 'Red List' survey to assess extinction risks to plants and animals

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

India is set to conduct a first-of-its-kind assessment of nearly 11,000 species of plants and animals and assess how vulnerable they are to extinction.

While India already lists endangered animals in various "schedules", this proposed exercise, called the National Red List Assessment of Indian Flora and Fauna, will, according to officials, give the most accurate assessment of the threats faced and thereby, inform conservation measures. The exercise is expected to go on till 2030.

The methodology adopted for the exercise will be as per that followed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, cur-

The goal of the project is to publish National Red Data Books on flora and fauna by 2030

rently the global standard which lists species worldwide on the basis of the extinction threats.

"The vision of the initiative is to establish a coordinated, science-based red listing system that accurately reflects the conservation status of Indian species. The project's goal is to publish National Red Data Books on flora and fauna by 2030, forming a central resource for conservation planning and threat mitigation. With this, a pool of 300 certified assessors will be created within the country enhancing the ca-

capacity and expertise," according to a statement from the Environment Ministry.

"To fulfil our commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), India has launched the National Red List Assessment initiative, aligned with IUCN global standards," said Kirtivardhan Singh, Minister of State for Environment.

Mr. Singh was leading an Indian delegation at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi.

The project will be entirely funded using public funds, Pratyush Mahapatra, Scientist, Zoological Survey of India, told *The Hindu*. The estimated budget is ₹95 crore.

India to launch 'Red List' survey to assess extinction risks to plants and animals

Source: The Hindu | Page: 16 | GS Paper: 3 – Environment & Biodiversity

Why in News:

India launched the National Red List Assessment of Indian Flora and Fauna — a first-of-its-kind national survey to assess extinction risks of species.

About the Initiative:

- Will assess nearly 11,000 species of plants and animals.
- Aim: Publish National Red Data Books on flora and fauna by 2030.
- Aligned with IUCN Red List methodology and global standards.

Purpose:

- To provide accurate threat assessment and guide conservation planning.
- Supports India's commitments under Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF).

Key Facts:

- Duration: Till 2030
- Around 300 trained assessors to conduct the study.

UN to cut 25% of its global peacekeeping force in response to U.S. funding strains

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations will begin slashing its peacekeeping force and operations, forcing thousands of soldiers in the next several months to evacuate far-flung global hotspots as a result of the latest U.S. funding cuts to the world body, a senior UN official said.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a private meeting, briefed presspersons on Wednesday on the



Known for their distinctive blue berets, the UN peacekeeping force has over 50,000 personnel deployed across the globe. AFP

25% reduction in peacekeepers worldwide as the United States, the largest UN donor, makes changes to align with President Do-

nald Trump's "America First" vision.

Roughly 13,000 to 14,000 military and police personnel out of more

than 50,000 peacekeepers deployed across nine global missions will be sent back to their home countries.

The decision to institute a major overhaul of the peacekeeping force – known globally for their distinctive blue berets or helmets – followed a meeting on Tuesday between UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and representatives from major donor countries, including Mike Waltz, the new U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

UN to cut 25% of its global peacekeeping force in response to U.S. funding strains

Source: The Hindu | Page: 18 | GS Paper: 2 – International Organizations / PSIR

Context

1. **Decision:** UN to cut 25% of its global peacekeeping force due to U.S. funding cuts.
2. **Scale:** Over 50,000 peacekeepers currently deployed across nine global missions to be reduced.
3. **Impact:** Around 13,000-14,000 troops and police personnel to be withdrawn.
4. **Reason:** U.S., the largest UN donor, reduced contributions under its "America First" policy.

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Who Is IAS Ashwini Bhide, Hailed as a Role Model for Mumbai Metro Transformation by Anand Mahindra?

From heritage to high-tech: Bhide's leadership in Metro Line 3 earns public praise and admiration

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Indian Masterminds Stories



Mumbai: Mumbai's daily commute has taken a futuristic leap with the launch of Metro Line 3, and at the heart of this transformation is senior IAS officer Ashwini Bhide, whose leadership is now being celebrated across social media. Industrialist Anand Mahindra shared a video showcasing the seamless transfer from CST station to Metro Line 3, calling the experience "cinematic" and hailing Bhide as a true role model.



1. Context:

Launch of Mumbai Metro Line 3 marks a major leap in the city's urban mobility transformation.

2. Leadership Role:

IAS Ashwini Bhide (senior IAS officer) led the planning and execution of Metro Line 3, earning wide public praise.

3. Recognition:

Anand Mahindra lauded her leadership, calling the Metro experience "cinematic" and Bhide a true role model for effective governance.

4. Impact:

Her work symbolizes efficient project management, citizen-centric governance, and ethical public leadership.