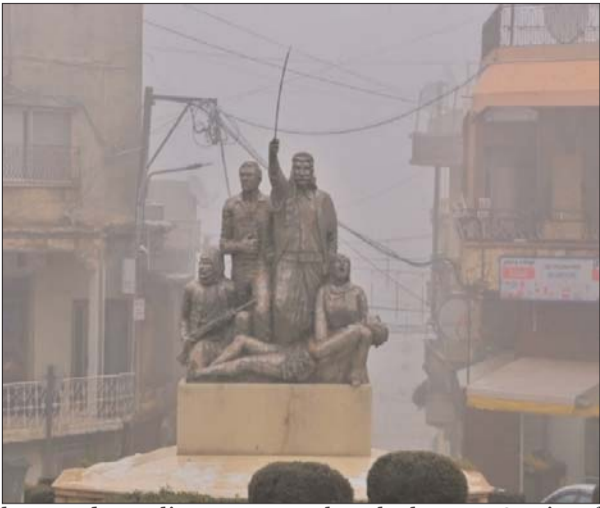


Israel to 'soon' allow Syrian druze to work in Golan, Defense Minister says

TEL AVIV [ISRAEL], MAR 9: Israel is preparing to "soon" allow Syrian Druze to work in the Golan Heights, Defense Minister Israel Katz said on Sunday.

"We will soon allow Druze workers from Syria to work in the Golan Heights communities in Israel," Katz said. "As Defense Minister, I salute them for their loyalty and heroism and their contribution to Israel's security in difficult and crucial times - we will continue to strengthen them and also protect their brothers in Syria against any threat."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for the demilitarization of southern Syria and protection for its Druze community on Feb. 23. An estimated 700,000-800,000 Druze live in Syria, mostly in southwestern areas near Israel and Jordan. They make up around four percent of the Syrian population. Ana-



lysts and Israeli Druze recently told TPS-IL that Netanyahu's remarks were a major shift in Israeli policy.

The Press Service of Israel's conversations with Druze residents of the Syrian town of Sweida revealed optimism about Netanyahu's pledge, as well as internal divisions.

The Druze of southern Syria are optimistic about a recent Israeli pledge to protect their communities,

though The Press Service of Israel's conversations with residents of Sweida also reveal some internal divisions.

The Israeli government announced on Monday it was planning to adopt an unprecedented five-year 3.9 billion NIS (USD 1.08 billion) development plan for the Druze and Circassian communities to boost local economies, housing, and local planning.

Israel's Druze community of 152,000 trace their ancestry back to the Biblical figure Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. Israeli Druze serve in senior positions in public and military life, and the bond between Jewish and Druze soldiers is referred to as the "covenant of blood." The Druze speak Arabic but are not Muslim and are very secretive about their religious beliefs.

The Druze living in the Galilee and Mount Carmel areas sided with the Jews in 1948 during Israel's War of Independence, opted to be part of Israeli society and established themselves in all areas of public life.

When Israel captured the Golan Heights during the Six-Day War of 1967, the Golan Druze refused Israeli offers of citizenship, believing Syria would recapture the plateau. But attitudes have changed since the Syrian Civil War broke out in 2011.

Ambassador Adarsh Swaika meets Kuwait's Finance Minister, discusses bilateral investment cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, MARCH 9: Ambassador of India to Kuwait, Adarsh Swaika on Sunday met with Kuwait's Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs, and Investment, Noura Sulaiman Al-Fassam.

The two discussed ways to strengthen bilateral investment cooperation across various sectors.

In a post on X, the Indian Embassy in Kuwait wrote, "Amb @AdarshSwaika1 called on H.E Noura Sulaiman Al-Fassam, Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Kuwait. Discussions pertained to bilateral investment cooperation in different sectors."

Earlier, last year in December, PM Modi visited Kuwait at the invitation of Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Emir of the State of Kuwait, where PM Modi held multiple engagements and discussions to further deepen the India-Kuwait ties.

Important agreements, announcements on mar-



itime security expected: Indian High Commissioner to Mauritius'

PM Modi also interacted with Kuwaiti social media influencers who promote Yoga in the Gulf nation.

The Prime Minister discussed cooperation in key sectors like pharmaceuticals, IT, FinTech and security with the Emir of Kuwait, Meshal Al-Ahmad

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Both the leaders agreed to elevate the bilateral relationship to a 'Strategic Partnership.' In a special gesture, the PM of Kuwait came to see off PM Modi at the airport as he left for India.

Ahead of his talks with Kuwait's top leadership, PM Modi received a ceremonial welcome and Guard of Honour at the Bayan

Palace. On the second day of his two-day Kuwait visit, PM Modi was received by Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait.

The leaders recalled the strong historical and friendly ties between the two countries and reaffirmed their full commitment to further expanding and deepening bilateral cooperation. In this context, they agreed to elevate the bilateral relationship to a 'Strategic Partnership', the statement said.

Later, PM Modi also said in a post on X, "Excellent meeting with His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. We discussed cooperation in key sectors like pharmaceuticals, IT, FinTech, Infrastructure and security. In line with the close ties between our nations, we have elevated our partnership to a strategic one and I am optimistic that our friendship will flourish even more in the times to come."

Russia set to hold joint naval exercises with China, Iran in Indian Ocean

MOSCOW [RUSSIA], MARCH 9: Russia is set to hold joint naval exercises with China and Iran in the Indian Ocean later this month, the Chinese defence ministry said on Sunday.

The 'Security Belt-2025' joint exercise in the waters not far from Iran will be held later in March, according to a statement by the Chinese defence ministry, Russian state media reported.

The maneuvers will take place in waters not far from the port of Chabahar in Iran, as per a Chinese defence ministry statement cited by TASS.

Iranian state media citing the media office for Iran's military drills said that the exercises will be held on Monday.

Chinese state media said that Chinese fleet includes a destroyer and a supply ship. The exercise plan includes drills on striking maritime targets, damage control, as well as joint search and rescue. The aim is to strengthen military mutual trust and foster pragmatic cooperation among the naval forces of the participating countries, the Chinese defence ministry said, according to Xinhua.

As per the Irna report, observers from the Azerbaijan Republic, South Africa, Oman, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Iraq, the UAE, and Sri Lanka will monitor the exercise.

Mehnatkash Aurat Rally urges solidarity against anti-Sindh projects in Karachi

KARCHI, MAR 09: The Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HB-WWF) organised a rally in Karachi on International Women's Day to call upon the people of Punjab and progressive forces from across Pakistan to stand in solidarity with Sindh against the government's controversial canals project on the Indus River, as reported by the Dawn.

The rally marched under the slogan 'Class resistance against the looting of the Indus River, our land and environment,' the Dawn reported.

According to Dawn, the rally began at the Boy Scouts Auditorium and ended at the Arts Council of Pakistan, where women workers, human rights activists, and labourers gath-



Navy and the Naval Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) will also participate in the drills that mark the seventh edition of "Security Belt" exercises by Iran, Russia and China, according to the media office of Iran.

An agreement was signed in January this year between the Russian president Vladimir Putin and his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian, to boost cooperation in areas including trade and the military.

Ties between Iran and the US have come under strain after US president Donald Trump called for a deal to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons, a move Tehran condemned as "bullying".

Earlier this week, Trump said that he sent a letter to the Iranian leadership seeking to initiate talks on a nuclear deal, as per Al Jazeera. Following this, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei said that "there are two ways Iran can be handled: militarily, or you make a deal" to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Speaking during a meeting with senior Iranian officials, Khamenei dismissed the entire premise, accusing the US of seeking even greater restrictions than in previous negotiations. "Some bully governments insist on negotiations," he said, according to state media. "But their negotiations are not aimed at solving issues, but to domi-

nate and impose their own expectations," he said, as per Al Jazeera.

On Thursday, the US imposed a new round of sanctions targeting Iran's oil industry, Iran's main source of income. The measures targeted firms, ships and individuals affiliated with companies already sanctioned by the US. Under Biden, the US routinely issued such penalties to enforce existing sanctions, Al Jazeera reported.

Meanwhile, Russia said earlier this week it was willing to help mediate new nuclear talks between the US and Iran amid a possible warmth in relations between the US and Russia over the war in Ukraine, as per Al Jazeera.



ered, waving bright red flags while raising slogans against corporate farming, environmental destruction and theft of Indus waters.

HBWWF General Secretary Zehra Khan pointed out that the 2022 floods already ravaged Sindh and that the proposed six-canal project would worsen the situation of water availability for an agricultural belt of

4.9 million hectares. She said climate change and exploitative economic policies affect women disproportionately, the Dawn cited.

The National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) General Secretary Nasir Mansoor said that the Indus River is a lifeline for Pakistan, particularly for Sindh. It is being blocked under the pretext of water

management projects, putting 4.9 million hectares of Sindh's agricultural land at risk of desertification.

According to the report of the Dawn, writer Noorul Huda Shah condemned the government's anti-people policies. She said that the elite do not care about future generations. Asad Iqbal Butt of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan warned that Karachi will suffer greatly since it lies at the tail end of the Indus River.

Meanwhile, hundreds of fisherfolk women gathered in Ibrahim Hyderi for a protest against the six-canal project. They demanded fair water distribution according to the 1991 Water Accord while chanting, "Let the Indus River flow naturally."

Following directives of UAE President, UAE inaugurates Madhol Field Hospital in Sudan

JUBA [SOUTH SUDAN], MARCH 9: Following the directives of President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the United Arab Emirates has inaugurated the Madhol Field Hospital in the Northern Bahr el Ghazal state of the Republic of South Sudan.

The event was attended by several ministers and officials from both the UAE and South Sudan, and international organisations.

The opening of the hospital - under the supervision of the International Humanitarian and Philanthropic Council - underscores the UAE's humanitarian commitment to developing and supporting communities in need and those facing challenges in accessing essential services, especially urgent healthcare and proper treatment, which is a fundamental requirement for all segments of society, including men, women, and children.

This is particularly significant in light of ongoing health challenges, such as the spread of malaria caused by insufficient medical services and inadequate access to medication. As a result, Madhol Field Hospital will play a key role in improving the quality of healthcare in South Sudan.

During his speech at the hospital's inauguration, Shakhboot bin Nahyan Al Nahyan, Minister of State, affirmed that the developmental and charity projects implemented by the UAE are a fundamental aspect of the country's commitment to supporting communities in need. The UAE's initiatives are carried out in close collaboration with the relevant international organisations, focusing on international priority projects such as education and healthcare.

He stated, "The inauguration of Madhol Field Hospital embodies the legacy of generosity and giving established by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and also reflects the visionary leadership focusing on development and solidarity of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE President, in addressing healthcare challenges and providing sustainable solutions to regions struggling with significant shortages in ac-



cess to essential healthcare services."

He added, "The UAE is dedicated to empowering communities through humanitarian and development projects, as well as individuals through skills development. Today, as we celebrate with South Sudan and reap the benefits of our strong bilateral relations and deep-rooted values, we announce the inauguration of Madhol Field Hospital, which has a 100-bed capacity, and several specialised clinics to treat approximately two million people from the host community, South Sudanese returning from Sudan, and Sudanese refugees in Northern Bahr el Ghazal state."

Sheikh Shakhboot emphasised that this hospital is the third healthcare facility built by the UAE to provide medical services to Sudanese refugees in neighboring countries. The facility follows the successful establishment of two field hospitals in Amdjarass and Abeche, Chad.

He added, "Since its founding, humanitarian aid and the protection of civilians, particularly the sick, children, the elderly, and women, have served as the foundation of the UAE's policy." In this regard, the UAE has been resolute in its position in relation to the crisis in Sudan since April 2023. The country's primary focus remains on addressing the catastrophic humanitarian situation, and adopting an approach prioritising civilians' requirements and fulfilling their needs."

Furthermore, Sheikh Shakhboot underscored

the UAE's steadfast and unwavering commitment to support all efforts to address this catastrophic crisis, and to work alongside regional and international partners to ensure stability and peace for the Sudanese people, reflecting the core values of humanitarian solidarity deeply rooted in the UAE's leadership and people. He continued, "The UAE announced an additional USD 200 million of aid during the High-Level Humanitarian Conference for the People of Sudan, held in Addis Ababa. The conference, the first to be held for Sudan this year, will serve as a catalyst for future conferences that are scheduled to assist the people of Sudan. The additional aid reflects the UAE's unwavering and continuous support for the Sudanese people."

"Since the onset of the crisis, the UAE has provided more than US\$600 million to support a humanitarian response. Furthermore, the UAE has provided US\$3.5 billion of humanitarian aid over the past 10 years to the people of Sudan, affirming the country's unwavering commitment to support people in need during crises."

For his part, Sultan Mohamed Bahr el Ghazal, Deputy Chairman of the UAE Aid Agency, underlined that the bilateral relations between the two countries are entering new levels of cooperation across various fields and sectors. The healthcare sector is regarded as a global priority that aligns with Sustainable Development Goals, focus-

ing on promoting good health and well-being.

This is achieved through the establishment of medical infrastructure, including public hospitals and specialised centres, and the development of health systems - all aimed at capacity building and development, and addressing future challenges, such as the spread of diseases and epidemics. Madhol Field Hospital will aim to provide essential medical services and treatments to various segments in Madhol region and surrounding areas.

For his part, Humphrey Karamagi, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative for South Sudan, said, "We express our appreciation to the UAE for its leading international humanitarian efforts in enhancing the healthcare sector in Africa, through several projects and initiatives. These include the construction of hospitals to meet the needs of millions and improve various healthcare services. The opening of Madhol Field Hospital today stands as one of the UAE's projects aimed at serving people from various surrounding regions, including refugees."

For his part, Simon Uber Mawut, Governor of Northern Bahr el Ghazal, said, "Today is the moment we have been waiting for, and we thank the UAE for constructing Madhol Field Hospital, which will aim to address health challenges in our region. Today is a historic day for the residents of Northern Bahr el Ghazal state and the entire region."