

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

8 INDIANS HELD IN QATAR GET 60 DAYS TO CONTEST THEIR JAIL TERMS

CONTEXT: Qatar has commuted the death sentence for eight Indian Navy veterans and turned that into “varying quantum” of jail terms, putting out the official confirmation about the high-profile case regarding the men who were arrested by the Gulf country in August 2022.

Trial in Qatar

A brief timeline of the case involving eight former Indian Navy officers, who were working at a defence services provider company in Qatar



Seeking release: A solidarity walk being taken out in Visakhapatnam in support of the former Naval officers held in Qatar. FILE PHOTO

30 Aug. 2022: They are arrested by Qatar authorities

26 Oct. 2023: Qatar’s Court of First Instance sentences all of them to death

28 Dec. 2023: A Qatari appellate court drops the death sentence

The eight: Captain Navtej Singh Gill, Captain Birendra Kumar Verma, Captain Saurabh Vasisht, Commander Amit Nagpal, Commander Purnendu Tiwari, Commander Sugunakar Pakala, Commander Sanjeev Gupta and Sailor Ragesh

Addressing the weekly press briefing, Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the legal team had been given 60 days to appeal against the jail terms.

COURT VERDICT

On December 28, the Court of Appeal in Qatar gave a verdict in which the death sentence was commuted and replaced with varying quantum of jail terms. The legal team has received the copy of the court’s order which is a confidential document. The case came to prominence because of strict secrecy that Qatar and India have maintained regarding the proceedings that took place over the past several months. India was “deeply shocked” when a trial court in Qatar handed the death sentence to the accused on October 26. Meanwhile, the Indian Embassy in Qatar had got consular access to the men in custody.

Outlining a plan for the future, Mr. Jaiswal said the court had given 60 days to the Indian legal team to appeal against the jail terms. As far as the next step is concerned, 60 days are there when the matter can come up for appeal in the Court of Cassation which is the highest court of Qatar. It is understood that the 60 days will be counted from the day of the latest order that commuted the death penalty.

Qatar, a strong regional player, is a key supplier of energy to India and at least seven lakh Indians form a part of the foreign work force in the Gulf nation. Both sides have not revealed the details of the case that cast a shadow on bilateral

relation over the past 16 months. India maintained close contact with the families of the eight men in the backdrop of the high-tension case and extended necessary legal help.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

IS CLAIMS BOMB ATTACKS AS IRAN VOWS REVENGE

CONTEXT: Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guards and first Vice-President Mohammad Mokhber vowed revenge on Thursday for explosions that killed at least 84 at a ceremony to commemorate top commander Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by a U.S. drone in Iraq in 2020.



Iranian authorities on Thursday revised down an earlier toll from the explosions to 84. A very strong retaliation will be handed to them on the hands of the soldiers of Soleimani. Mr. Mokhber told reporters at a hospital were some of the wounded were receiving treatment for the bloodiest attack since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the attack. Earlier, a senior official in U.S. President Joe Biden’s administration said the blasts appeared to represent “a terrorist attack” of the type carried out in the past by Islamic State militants. The Guards also said the attack “strengthens the resolve to decisively and justly punish the perpetrators”.

'HEINOUS, INHUMANE'

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi condemned the "heinous and inhumane crime", and Iran's top authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, vowed revenge for the twin bombings. However, second-rung officials blamed the U.S. and Israel for the attacks.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**TERROR IN IRAN**

CONTEXT: The twin blasts in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman at a memorial for Qassem Soleimani, the Quds Force commander whom the U.S. assassinated in Baghdad in January 2020, expose the security vulnerabilities of the Iranian regime at a time when conflicts are spreading in West Asia.

At least 84 were killed in the worst terror attack in the Islamic Republic's history. Soleimani, the brain behind the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' (IRGC) overseas operations, had enjoyed cult status when alive, and became a symbol of an embattled regime's resilience over the past four years. While Iran's leaders called it a terrorist attack but stopped short of blaming anyone, mid-rung officials said the responsibility for the attack "lies with the U.S. and the Zionist entity". The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility. For the IS, Soleimani was a sworn enemy as he had mobilised Shia militias to fight the IS in Syria and Iraq. These groups played a role in the urban battles in Iraq during 2018-19 that saw the destruction of the physical structures of the IS Caliphate. The group lost its proto state but survived as a terrorist entity in parts of Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

For Iran, the attack has come at a precarious moment when tensions are rising in West Asia. The Kerman memorial event was bombed a day after a senior Hamas leader was killed in Beirut in a drone strike, for which Lebanese officials have blamed Israel. Hezbollah, which has been engaging Israeli troops in a limited way since October 7, has vowed retaliation. On December 25, an Israeli strike in Syria killed Seyyed Razi Mousavi, a senior IRGC adviser. Israel, whose ongoing attack on Gaza has already killed at least 22,000 people, seems ready to take more risks even at the cost of regional escalation, while in the Red Sea, Iran-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen have been repeatedly attacking commercial vessels since late November. Pro-Iran Shia militias have targeted U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria since October 7, a U.S. strike in Iraq killed a Shia militia commander. The Israel-Hamas war is no longer about just Israel and Hamas. It has put the whole region in a ring of fire. As chaos spreads the IS seems to have found an opportunity to strike its old enemy which is under pressure. The attack should serve as a warning to Iran and its rivals. If chaos and instability spread it would be a boon for jihadists. This calls for a de-escalation of the current regional crisis. Iran, on the other side, should not walk into the web of provocations set by its rivals. It should show restraint and focus on strengthening internal security.

"Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education. — Martin Luther King Jr.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS****CHINA, U.S. HOLD RIVAL DRILLS IN DISPUTED SOUTH CHINA SEA**

CONTEXT: China showcased on Thursday fighter jets firing missiles in the South China Sea, as it held rival military exercises with the United States in the hotly contested waters.



The drills follow tense standoffs between Beijing and Manila in disputed reefs that saw vessels from the two countries collide and Chinese ships blast water cannon at Philippine boats.

China last month voiced growing frustration and anger at the Philippines' unexpectedly bold tactics, warning its neighbour to exercise "caution". Neither state media nor the military said when the footage was taken, only that it took place recently. But its release came a day after China announced a deployment of its navy and air force in the South China Sea on Wednesday and Thursday. The drills coincided with an two-day exercise by the U.S. and the Philippines in the disputed waters, involving an aircraft carrier strike group led by the USS Carl Vinson.


VEDHIK
 IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra
www.vedhikiasacademy.org

**Comprehensive Coaching For
568 Government Jobs**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

DEADLY STRIKES HIT GAZA AS TENSIONS RISE IN WEST ASIA

CONTEXT: Israeli bombing killed dozens of people overnight in Gaza, the Health Ministry of the Hamas-run Palestinian territory, as regional tensions have surged over the almost three-months-old war.



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was due to head to the West Asia, a U.S. official said on condition of anonymity, the top diplomat's fourth trip to the region since the Hamas attack of October 7. Tensions have also surged with Israel's northern neighbour Lebanon, where a strike in Beirut on Tuesday, widely assumed to have been carried out by Israel, killed Hamas deputy leader Saleh al-Aruri.

Hezbollah has vowed that the killing of Aruri and six other Hamas operatives on its home turf will not go unpunished, labelling it "a serious assault on Lebanon... and a dangerous development". Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah warned Israel against all-out conflict, after Israeli army chief Herzi Halevi, in a visit to the Lebanese border, said troops were "in very high readiness". Nasrallah said that "for now, we are fighting on the front line following meticulous calculations" but warned that, "if the enemy thinks of waging a war on Lebanon, we will fight without restraint, without rules, without limits and without restrictions". Mossad chief David Barnea warned on Wednesday that the Israeli spy agency "is committed to settling the score with the murderers" who carried out the Hamas attack.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

CENTRE CONSIDERS SETTING UP P&I ENTITY TO INSURE INDIAN SHIPOWNERS FROM HIGH RISKS

CONTEXT: India is looking to have its own protection and indemnity (P&I) entity. This will allow shipowners the option to purchase open-ended high-risk covers (insurance) that traditional players are generally reluctant to provide.



The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) is exploring setting up a P&I entity for Indian shipowners. Discussions are underway, and details like structure, funding, and operational activities will be clarified within the next few months. This entity would provide essential P&I insurance to Indian shipping companies.

Challenges and considerations: Small number of Indian-flagged vessels compared to global fleets makes a P&I pool less attractive. Seed funding or corpus might be needed initially, potentially from the Ministry.

Current scenario: Indian shipowners rely on International Group of P&I Clubs for coverage. P&I clubs are mutual insurance associations for maritime liability risks beyond traditional marine insurance.

Potential benefits: Dedicated P&I entity could offer competitive rates and customized coverage for Indian needs. More control over insurance decisions and claims handling.

Overall, establishing a P&I entity holds potential for the Indian shipping industry, but overcoming challenges and ensuring financial sustainability are crucial.

CRACKING
CIVIL SERVICES
NO MORE A
DIFFICULT TASK

COME JOIN WITH US

VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra
www.vedhikiasacademy.org

**Comprehensive Coaching For
568 Government Jobs**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PRIVATE SECTOR FUNDING KEY TO CLIMATE TRANSITION, WORLD BANK CHIEF SAYS

CONTEXT: The World Bank is working to slash how long it takes to get financing projects off the ground as part of a push to speed up and scale up the 79-year-old development lender, its president told AFP.



The World Bank is working to speed up and scale up its operations, with a focus on climate change.

- The bank currently takes an average of 27 months to get financing projects off the ground, and President Ajay Banga wants to reduce that by one-third over the first couple of years.
- Banga has made some big changes since taking over in June, including altering the bank's mission statement to include climate change and setting up a private sector advisory body.
- He is also exploring ways to "sweat" the bank's existing balance sheet and boost lending capacity without additional funding from donor countries.

The bank is increasing its focus on climate financing, with a target of 45% of its annual financing going to climate-related projects.

- Half of this commitment will go to adaptation, and the other half to mitigation.
- The bank estimates that developing countries will need an average of \$2.4 trillion each year between now and 2030 to address climate change, conflict, and pandemics.
- To meet this challenge, the bank is working to encourage greater private sector participation.

Three key challenges to private investment are regulatory certainty, foreign currency risk, and political risk.

- The bank is working to address these challenges by simplifying access to political risk guarantees and other tools.
- Overall, the World Bank is undergoing a significant transformation under Banga's leadership, with a focus on speed, efficiency, and climate action.

Here are some additional takeaways from the article:

- The World Bank is facing the challenge of balancing the needs of both developed and developing countries in the fight against climate change.
- The bank is looking for innovative ways to finance climate action, such as through public-private partnerships.
- The success of the bank's efforts will depend on its ability to attract private sector investment.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SHIELDING SEBI

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court of India's ruling on a batch of petitions, filed in the wake of a U.S.-based short seller's allegations of malfeasance including stock price manipulation at the Adani group of companies, has squarely tossed the ball back to the markets regulator's court.

The Court has opted to subordinate petitioners' entreaties to protect larger public interest to its chariness to substitute "its own wisdom over the regulatory policies" of the Securities and Exchange Board of India. In its 46-page order, the Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud is emphatic in observing that "SEBI has prime facie conducted a comprehensive investigation" that "inspires confidence", and that "the facts of this case do not warrant a transfer of investigation from SEBI" given that "prima facie no deliberate inaction or inadequacy" was found in the regulator's conduct of its probe. Strikingly, the Bench has completely skirted the fundamental questions that the Court-appointed Expert Committee in its May 2023 report had opted to leave as a 'matter between SEBI and the Court' — the determination of possible violations pertaining to minimum public shareholding and related party transactions. The Bench has instead seized upon prayers urging the Court to direct SEBI to revoke its amendments to the Foreign Portfolio Investors Regulations and Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements — amendments that were at the heart of petitioners' submissions of regulatory failure — and roundly denied them on grounds that there was neither "any illegality", nor were the norms "capricious, arbitrary or violative of the Constitution".

The ruling has also done little to assuage investors' concerns about SEBI's approach to getting to the bottom of the allegations raised by Hindenburg Research in its January 2023 report. Without elaboration on any of the regulator's findings, the Court has blandly observed that "SEBI has completed 22 out of the 24 investigations into the Adani group" and that completion of the remaining two "are pending due to inputs being awaited from foreign regulators". The Bench has directed SEBI to complete these "expeditiously". While the Court's reluctance to review the policy actions of a 'specialised regulator' is understandable, the decision to leave the crucial question of SEBI's perceived tardiness in investigating allegations of corporate malfeasance and market manipulation by a large conglomerate back to the remit of the very same watchdog hints at a degree of judicial abstinence that may only undermine the larger public good. The Court is surely aware of past instances where it has found SEBI wanting in alacrity of enforcement, a facet flagged by the experts' panel appointed in this case as well. After all, 'justice must not only be done, but it must also be seen to be done'.



VEDHIK

IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S
TOP MOST
CIVIL SERVANTS
FOR COACHING**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

Head Office:

Vedhik IAS Academy
Mercy Estate,
MG Road, Ravipuram,
Ernakulam-682 015,

Corporate office:

Vedhik IAS Academy
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office

Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
Museum Road. Bangalore -
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:

Bobscoedu,

Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,
Road: 2701, Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain
www.bobscoedu.com