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WAGNER CHIEF TO MOVE TO BELARUS IN NEW DEAL

Heavily armed Russian mercenaries withdrew from the southern Russian city of Rostov overnight under a deal that defused an unprecedented challenge to the authority of President Vladimir Putin and halted their rapid advance on Moscow.

Lukashenko mediates

Fighters of the Wagner group returned to their bases in return for guarantees for their safety and the leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, will move to Belarus, as per the agreement mediated by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

The aborted mutiny raises questions about Mr. Putin's grip on a country he has ruled with an iron hand for over two decades.

Mr. Prigozhin, 62, a former Putin ally whose forces have fought the bloodiest battles of the 16-month war in Ukraine, said his decision to advance on Moscow was intended to remove corrupt and incompetent Russian commanders he blames for botching the war.

His whereabouts on Sunday were not immediately clear.

Videos shared on social media from Rostov overnight purportedly

showed the mercenaries withdrawing from the city in a convoy of armoured vehicles, tanks and coaches to the sound of cheers, chants of "Wagner" and celebratory gunfire from local residents.

"Take care of yourselves," shouted one woman.

The show of support for Wagner's short-lived insurrection will alarm the authorities in a country which has become increasingly intolerant of any public criticism of Mr. Putin and his rule.

Under the deal Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said a criminal case opened against Mr. Prigozhin for armed mutiny would be dropped, Mr. Prigozhin would move to Belarus, and Wagner fighters who rallied to his cause would face no action, in recognition of their previous service to Russia. Mr. Peskov said Mr. Lukashenko had offered to mediate, with Mr. Putin's approval, because he had known Mr. Prigozhin personally for around 20 years.

Meanwhile, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko flew to Beijing for talks with China on "international" issues. It was unclear if the visit was in response to Wagner's rebellion.

MODI, SISI INK DEAL ON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP



Sightseeing tour: PM Narendra Modi visits the Great Pyramid of Giza with his Egyptian counterpart, Mostafa Madbouly, on Sunday. PTI

India and Egypt on Sunday signed an agreement on a strategic partnership as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Cairo. The Government of Egypt bestowed the highest honour of the land — the Order of the Nile — on the visiting Indian leader and Mr. Modi described his first state visit to Egypt as "historic".

"The four agreements that were signed during the visit (June 24-25) of the honourable Prime Minister — first, the most important, and a landmark development in the history of bilateral relationship was the signature on the strategic partnership between India and Egypt. It was signed by the Honourable

Prime Minister Modi and the Honourable President El-Sisi of Egypt," Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra announced.

He said green and renewable collaboration will be an important part of future partnership with Egypt because of the importance the two sides attach to clean energy.

Three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in the fields of agriculture, archaeology and antiquities, and competition law were also signed, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

The two sides discussed multilateral cooperation at the G-20 and other subjects such as food, energy security and climate change. Earlier on Sunday, in a special gesture from Mr. Sisi, Mr. Modi received the Order of the Nile, the topmost state honour of Egypt. Among the past recipients of this honour were the late Sultan Qaboos (the ruler of Oman), Nelson Mandela and Suharto, former President of Indonesia. "It is with great humility that I accept the 'Order of the Nile'. I thank the Government and people of Egypt for this honour. It indicates the warmth and affection they have towards India and the people of our nation," Mr. Modi said after receiving the honour.

During the official discussion held at the Al-Ittihadiya Palace of Cairo, the two leaders noted that the newly formed 'India Unit' in the Egyptian Cabinet will be a "useful tool in steering bilateral collaborations", the Ministry of External Affairs said. Mr. Modi and Mr. Sisi had a "one to one" conversation, Mr. Kwatra added. Mr. Modi visited the Heliopolis Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery which paid homage to over 4,300 Indian soldiers who had perished in Egypt and Aden during World War I. He met members of the Indian community as scheduled and visited the Al Hakim mosque.

AFTER MEETING SHAH, BIREN SAYS WILL REACH OUT TO KUKIS

Towards stability: Biren Singh said Amit Shah advised them to work as a team to restore peace in Manipur. PTI

Union Home Minister instructs Manipur Chief Minister to crack down on violence irrespective of the community involved, asks to arrange for a talk with the women's group Meira Paibis

Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Sunday said the Kuki community was among his own, and promised that a fresh round of dialogue will be initiated with all stakeholders in the State.

Mr. Singh was in Delhi to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah and brief him "about the evolving situation on the ground in Manipur". The meeting comes a day after Mr. Shah chaired an all-party meeting on the issue.

Ten MLAs from the Kuki community in the hill districts of Manipur, including seven from



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the BJP, demanded the Chief Minister's resignation.

Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Singh said he had a detailed discussion with Mr. Shah, who advised him to establish peace in the State and revive dialogue across communities — including the Meira Paibis (the women's group) and civil society groups.

Mr. Shah is learnt to have told the Chief Minister that he needs to speak to the women's group as it was becoming a problem for the security forces.

According to a source, the Chief Minister was told that he cannot be seen to have sympathy for any particular community and that the crackdown on violence has to begin irrespective of the community involved. "The Chief Minister was told that he has to drive home the point among the Meitei that Kukis will be reached out to. He has to convince the people and take care of the State in a bipartisan manner," the source said.

The Meira Paibis have been leading protests and blockades, at times obstructing the security forces from carrying out operations. On Saturday, 12 members of a banned extremist outfit detained by the Army had to be released as a 1,200-strong women-led group surrounded the security forces in Imphal East, the Army said.

Mr. Singh revealed that Internet in the State was unlikely to be restored soon as the situation was not conducive. However, curfew hours were being relaxed in many areas, he noted. There were enough Central security forces in the State and additional force was not required, he added.

Mr. Singh was accompanied by BJP Manipur in-charge Sambit Patra, Rajya Sabha member Sanajaoba Leishemba and State Assembly Speaker Satyabrata Singh. Tapan Kumar Deka, Director of Intelligence Bureau, was also present at the meeting.

'No more casualties'

Mr. Singh tweeted that under Mr. Shah's close supervision, the Centre and State government have been able to control the violence to a great extent in the past week. "It may be noted that there has been no report of casualties due to the violence since 13th of June," he said.

"Hon'ble Union HM has assured that the Union government will take all possible steps to bring normalcy in Manipur. Further, Amit Shah Ji advised us to strengthen our work towards achieving everlasting peace and also sought the cooperation of every stakeholders in Manipur to ensure that peace prevails in the State," the tweet said.

In a presentation at the all-party meeting on Saturday, the Union Home Ministry said that since May 3, as many as 5,036 cases of arson have been reported, 5,889 FIRs registered and 144 arrests made. Around 36,000 security personnel have been deployed in the State, while 40 IPS officers and 20 medical teams have been sent to Manipur. Around 1,800 weapons out of over 4,000 weapons looted from police armouries have been returned.

The Ministry cited three primary reasons for the violence — legacy issues, infiltration from Myanmar and the March 27 Manipur High Court order directing the State government to submit a recommendation for the inclusion of Meitei in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) list.

The violence escalated after a Tribal Solidarity March was organised in Churachandpur and other hill districts to protest the High Court order on May 3. At least 131 people have been killed and 60,000 people displaced since ethnic violence between the tribal Kuki and Meitei communities erupted in the State on May 3 then.

THE INDIA-U.S. DEAL FOR 31 MQ-9B DRONES



What are the capabilities of the soon-to-be procured MQ-9B High Altitude Long Endurance Unmanned Aerial vehicles? What is the process to be followed for timely delivery?

The story so far:

U.S President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed India's plans to procure General Atomics MQ-9B High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) Unmanned Aerial vehicles (UAV), the joint statement issued last week after talks between the two leaders said. This sets the stage for the acquisition of 31 of these armed UAVs, 15 SeaGuardians for the Indian Navy and 16 SkyGuardians — eight each for the Indian Army and Air Force.

What is the cost and the process to be followed?

Giving more details on the nature of purchase, the joint statement said that the MQ-9Bs, which will be assembled in India, will enhance the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities of India's armed forces across domains. "As part of this plan, General Atomics will also establish a Comprehensive Global Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility in India in support of India's long-term goals to boost indigenous defence capabilities."

The procurement process has commenced with the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh according the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) on June 15, the first step in the process. The deal will be executed through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route of the U.S. government and is expected to take a few months to be concluded.

On this a Ministry of Defence (MoD) statement said the AoN noted the estimated cost of \$3,072 million provided by the U.S. government. "However, price will be negotiated once policy approval of the US Government is received.

The MoD will compare the acquisition cost with the best price offered by General Atomics (GA) to other countries. The procurement is in progress and would be completed as per the laid down procedure." The price and other terms and conditions of the purchase are yet to be finalised and are subject to negotiations, the MoD statement noted.

According to a senior MoD official, India is negotiating to increase the indigenous content under the deal. "The current indigenous content proposed is 8-9% while India is hoping it can be increased upto 15-20%. Discussions are underway. General Atomics is positive to it and the U.S. government has to accept it," the official said. General Atomics is in talks with several Indian companies for domestic manufacture of components as part of the deal, officials said. This could expand further to potentially include the manufacture of some electronics, sensor and avionics if the indigenous content goes up.

Detailing the process to be followed, the MoD statement said that under the FMS route, a Letter of Request (LOR) would be sent to the U.S. government where tri-services requirements, details of equipment and terms of the procurement would be included. "Based on the LOR, the U.S. government and the MoD will finalise the Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA) where details of equipment and terms of the procurement would be negotiated and finalised in accordance with the FMS programmeand the price and terms offered by the U.S. Government and General Atomics to other countries", the Ministry detailed. The U.S. Administration will have to notify the U.S. Congress of the sale, expected to be a formality in this case. In the penultimate step, the deal has to be approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security after which the contract will be concluded.

What do the UAV's bring in terms of capability?

The MQ-9B has two variants — the SkyGuardian and the SeaGuardian, its maritime variant. The MQ-9B is designed to fly over the horizon via satellite for up to 40 hours, depending on configuration, in all types of weather and safely integrate into civil airspace, according to its manufacturer. For instance, the SeaGuardian configuration can include a 360-degree surface-search maritime radar, automatic identification system, sonobuoy monitoring system, and sonobuoy dispensers for persistent anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare missions.

According to General Atomics, the MQ-9B can provide roughly 80% of the capability of a large human-flown maritime patrol aircraft at about 20% of its cost per hour. That makes it much more economical for navies to, for example, send out SeaGuardians to clear big volumes of air or sea and then, if anything of interest is discovered, vector in a human-crewed aircraft to save it the time, cost, and wear that it otherwise might have expended, the company stated. This is the primary reason the Indian Navy is keen on these UAVs as it significantly reduces the wear and tear on manned aircraft, its fleet of 12 P-8I long range maritime patrol aircraft, as well as reduce crew fatigue in keeping an eye over the wide expanse of the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

For the Army and Air Force, the MQ-9Bs can provide round-the-clock surveillance looking far beyond the borders, for instance on the movement of Chinese military buildup and troop movement along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and deep inside. It also seamlessly integrates with other U.S.-origin platforms that India operates, the P-8Is, AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, MH-60R multi-role helicopters among others expanding MQ-9B's multi-domain mission set.

What UAVs are already in service?

The Indian Navy has leased two MQ-9As from General Atomics with the maiden flight taking place on November 21, 2020. In their two years of operation till November 2022, they had completed 10,000 flight hours, and "helped the Indian Navy to cover over 14 million square miles of operating area", General Atomics has announced.

At Aero India in Bengaluru in February 2023, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and General Atomics announced that the turbo-propeller engines which power the MQ-9B will be supported by HAL's engine division for the Indian market. "The companies are looking to formulate a comprehensive engine MRO

programme for upcoming HALE Remotely Piloted Aircraft projects," a joint statement said.

The MQ-9 is a significant technological leap from the original RQ-1/MQ-1Predator that heralded the arrival of long endurance armed drones at the end of the twentieth century. Armed with AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, the Predator became a symbol of the U.S. war on terror after the 9/11 attacks, with their extensive employment in Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan in the early 2000s. The RQ-1 Predator, which was first flown by the U.S. Air Force (USAF) in 1995, was retired in 2018 and replaced by the MQ-9 Reaper.

According to the USAF, the Reaper is employed primarily as an intelligence-collection asset and secondarily against dynamic execution targets. "Given its significant loiter time, wide-range sensors, multi-mode communications suite, and precision weapons, it provides a unique capability to perform strike, coordination, and reconnaissance against high-value, fleeting, and time-sensitive targets."

PRICING, TERMS OF MQ-9B DRONE DEAL WITH U.S. YET TO BE FINALISED, SAYS GOVT.



Lethal weapon: The U.S. government has provided an estimated cost of \$3.072 billion for 31MQ-9B, says the Defence Ministry. PTI

Ministry says it will compare the acquisition cost with the best price offered to other countries by General Atomics; adds 'speculative reports' on social media were aimed at derailing the process

R ejecting "speculative reports" on social media with regard to the price and other terms of purchase of 31 MQ-9B High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) from the U.S., the Defence Ministry on Sunday said the estimated cost provided by the U.S. government was \$3.072 billion, but the price and other terms and conditions of the purchase were "yet to be finalised".

The Ministry said it would "compare the acquisition cost with the best price offered" by General Atomics (GA) to other countries.

The Defence Acquisition Council accorded the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) on June 15 for the acquisition of 31 MQ-9B — 16 Sky Guardian and 15 Sea Guardian — UAVs for the three services through the Foreign Military Sale (FMS) route. The AoN included the number of UAVs to be procured along with associated equipment.

"The AoN noted the estimated cost of \$3,072 million provided by the U.S. government. However, price will be negotiated once policy approval of the U.S. Government is received. The MoD will compare the acquisition cost with the best price offered by General Atomics (GA) to other countries," a Ministry statement said.

Letter of Request

"The procurement is in progress and would be completed as per the laid down procedure."

Detailing the process to be followed, the Ministry said that under the FMS route, a Letter of Request (LOR) would be sent to the U.S. government where tri-services' requirements, details of equipment and terms of the procurement would be included.

"Based on LOR, the U.S. Government and MoD will finalise the Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA) where details of equipment and terms of the procurement would be negotiated and finalised in accordance with the FMS program and the price and terms offered by the U.S. Government and GA to other countries," it stated.

In this regard, referring to the "speculative reports" on social media with respect to the price and other terms of purchase, the Ministry said these were "uncalled for, have ulterior motives and aimed at derailing the due acquisition process". "Price and other terms and conditions of the purchase are yet to be finalised and subject to negotiations," the statement added requesting not to spread fake news and misinformation which can have a serious impact on the "morale of the armed forces and adversely impact the acquisition process."

As reported by The Hindu earlier, the LoR is expected to be sent to the U.S. government in the first week of July and defence officials said the process was expected to take a few months.

India is also negotiating to increase the indigenous content in the deal, from the current 8%-9% to 15%-20% which will significantly increase sourcing from Indian industry.

PAK. ARMY DEPLOYING NEW CHINESE CANNON ON LOC, SAY OFFICIALS

China has been helping the Pakistan Army build its defence infrastructure, besides providing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, setting up communication towers and laying underground cables along the Line of Control, officials said.

This, according to officials, is part of efforts to further shore up China's position as an all-weather friend of Pakistan while ensuring the safety of growing Chinese enclaves in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) set up on the pretext of securing the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) road and hydel projects built in the occupied territory. The officials said that the recently developed SH-15, a 155 mm truck-mounted howitzer gun, has also been spotted at some places along the Line of Control (LoC) after it was displayed on Pakistan Day last year.

Known as a 'shoot and scoot' artillery weapon, Pakistan had signed a contract with Chinese firm North Industries Group Corporation Limited (Norinco) for the supply of 236 SH-15s and, according to London-based Janes Defence magazine, the first batch was delivered in January 2022.

Though no senior PLA officials were observed at forward posts, some intercepts suggested that Chinese troops and engineers were setting up infrastructure along the LoC, the officials said.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

A NEW REGIME

Last week, the Drug Controller General of India cleared, under the provisions of 'emergency use authorisation', a new mRNA vaccine for COVID-19 developed by Pune-based Gennova Biopharmaceuticals, a pioneer in India in developing mRNA vaccines. The vaccine is meant to be particularly effective against the dominant Omicron variant. With the World Health Organization having officially declared the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no longer the obsessive public interest in new variants. Even less so in newer vaccines. Data suggest that the uptake of booster, or 'precautionary doses' of the array of COVID vaccines available in India has been declining for several months. Therefore, the significance of the new vaccine, GEMCOVAC-OM, is that it shows that an Indian company has the capability to make an mRNA vaccine, believed to be amenable to rapid production and scale-up, that could be useful against any future virus.

Normally, vaccines must go through progressive stages of testing, from petri dishes, to animals and expanding cohorts of human test subjects. Doing greater harm than good, or being unable to be better than the alternative in any of these stages is a ground for disqualification. Which is why vaccine development and approvals are a decades-long enterprise. During COVID-19, this risk-averse strategy was deemed unsuitable for the crisis at hand because

of which drug regulators globally allowed vaccine makers to combine multiple stages while evaluating efficacy, thus giving greater leeway to experimental formulations. This underlines the basic framework of 'emergency use authorizations (EUA)' adopted by regulators globally. Unlike the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that has for many years been evaluating novel drug and vaccine candidates, India's regulatory system has largely been geared toward evaluating formulations that have been approved abroad and in assessing their suitability to India. Mistrust, arbitrary decree and lax regulations have historically plaqued clinical trials in India. More than evidence-based assessment, it was a technicality in India's 'New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019' that allowed EUA in India for COVID-19 vaccines. A credible regime of phased, clinical trials and independent regulation for new drugs is still in its infancy in India. The FDA still authorises updated COVID-19 vaccines under emergency use provisions because while the pandemic is over, COVID-19 is not and thousands continue to die globally. This alone, however, cannot be the basis for continuing with the EUA regime in India. While the flexibility to accelerate should always be present, India must specify a streamlined regulatory process that weeds out non-essential steps but is hawk-eyed on safety and adverse reactions from new drugs and vaccines.

OUTREACH TO DIASPORA AND STATESMANSHIP

V. Suryanarayan

In a speech while addressing the Tamil diaspora in Tokyo in the course of his overseas tour in May 2023, to Singapore and Japan, to attract investments to the State, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M.K. Stalin, had said that the Government of Tamil Nadu would protect the Tamil diaspora that has spread far and wide in search of education, business, and employment. He added that protecting the Tamil language meant protecting the Tamil community. He held forth the promise that his government and the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) would extend all support to the Tamil community.

Diaspora facts

Among the Indian diaspora, Tamils constitute a substantial number. They form the overwhelming majority of the Indian population in Malaysia, Singapore, and Sri Lanka, are in good numbers in Myanmar, Mauritius, South Africa, the Seychelles, the Re-Union Islands, Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, Australia, New Zealand, the Gulf countries, the United States and Canada, Britain and the European countries.

These dynamic groups have three identities — first, the Tamil identity; second, the Indian identity, and third, the identity of the countries in which they have settled. Equally interesting is the phenomenon of the diaspora of the diaspora. From Fiji, Malaysia, and Singapore, the Indian diaspora is migrating to greener pastures such as Australia, Canada, and the U.S. Bharati Mukherjee, the well-known diasporic writer, was apt in saying: "I am a woman with a series of countries. It is necessary for me to put down roots wherever I land and wherever I choose to stay."

It would be simplistic and naïve to assume that the hopes that they entertain and the problems that they face are identical. It is closely related to the nature of their migration, their numerical numbers, their educational and professional attainments, their economic clout, and, above all, the majority-minority syndrome in the host countries. The Tamil diaspora has excelled in politics, economics, literature, the fine arts, sports, and science. A few names that shine include Dr. Chandrasekhar, Monty Naicker, Sambandan, Janaki Thevar, T.S. Maniam, Saumiyamoorthy Thondaman, S.R. Nathan, Muthiah Muralitharan, Nagamattoo, Indira Nooyi, Sundar Pichai, Raghuram Rajan and Kamala Harris.

Host country policies, their impact

Mr. Stalin's speech is a reminder of two statements made by Jawaharlal Nehru, in Malaya in March 1946 — "When India becomes free, her hands will be long and powerful to protect each and every one of her children abroad." And, "Indians abroad must remain united and guard their rights and uphold their heads proudly as Indians — children of a country with a great past and greater future."

But Nehru's hopes were soon shattered. The first legislative enactment of Ceylon, soon after independence, was to render the Indian Tamils, who were taken to Ceylon under the protective umbrella of the British Government, to

provide labour in the tea plantations. Nehru's principled stand was that all those who considered Ceylon to be their home and have stayed there for long should be conferred citizenship. Ceylon argued that it was its sovereign right to introduce citizenship regulations.

The Burmese government never granted citizenship to thousands of Indian Tamils and expelled them. On the eve of their departure, the Burmese currency was demonetised. The women could not even bring their mangalyasutra with them. As far as neighbouring countries are concerned, bilateral relations have two dimensions.

The first is to improve relations with governments, politically, economically, and culturally. The second is to protect and foster the interests of Indian minority groups. An overview of India's policy towards Sri Lanka shows that to improve political relations, New Delhi, on some occasions, was willing to sacrifice the interests of the Indian diaspora. The Sirimavo-Shastri Pact of October 1964 is an example of betrayal. New Delhi adopted the policy of give and take and converted the Indian Tamil community into merchandise to be divided between the two countries. It must be highlighted that all important leaders of the Madras Presidency, Rajagopalachari, Kamaraj Nadar, C.N. Annadurai, P. Ramamurti, and Krishna Menon were opposed to the agreement. Mr. Stalin has highlighted the necessity to protect and promote the Tamil language. But the sad fact remains is that in many countries, the Tamil community has forgotten the Tamil language, one of the key elements of Tamil culture.

Federal camaraderie is essential

The policy towards the Indian diaspora comes under the exclusive jurisdiction of the central government. Even then, State governments can influence policies by building public opinion. What is essential, in the present context, is camaraderie and friendship between the Narendra Modi government and the DMK government.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), could have used the term 'persecuted minorities'. The CAA also does not include Sri Lanka, where ethnic fratricide has compelled many Tamils to come to Tamil Nadu as refugees. New Delhi terms Sri Lankan Tamil refugees as illegal immigrants and argues that they must go back to Sri Lanka.

Instead of trying to have cordial relations with the central government, a policy of confrontation by Tamil Nadu would be self-defeating. What the refugees want is Indian citizenship. All of them fulfil the residential qualifications laid down in the Indian Citizenship Act. Indian Tamil refugees, who number 29,500, are stateless. What is more, Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are willing to surrender their Sri Lankan citizenship to get Indian citizenship.

The need of the hour is for the state and central government to come together and arrive at an amicable solution. This calls for statesmanship, not political opportunism



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