

# Central committee member among 14 Maoists killed in Gariaband encounter

**Shubhomoy Sikdar**

RAIPUR

At least 14 Maoists have been killed in Gariaband district along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha boundary, the police said on Tuesday.

The police had on Monday said the number of fatalities in the anti-Maoist operation was two but updated the figures based on the bodies recovered after the operation.

Those killed include Jayaram, alias Chalpati, a senior member of the central committee, the highest decision-making body of the Maoists, carrying a bounty of ₹1 crore, Gariaband Superintendent of Police Nikhil Rakhecha told *The Hindu*.



Security forces at Bhaludiggi Hill, near the Odisha-Chhattisgarh boundary, in Gariaband on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A large cache of arms and ammunition has also been recovered, he said, adding that there could be a possibility of more Maoists being killed.

The operation was carried out in the area of Mainpur police station by a joint team of security per-

sonnel from the District Reserve Guard (DRG), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) from Chhattisgarh, and Special Operation Group (SOG) from Odisha.

A CoBRA member had

sustained minor injuries.

## 'Mighty blow'

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday described the operation as "another mighty blow" to Naxalism.

"Another mighty blow to Naxalism. Our security forces achieved major success towards building a Naxal-free Bharat," the Home Minister wrote on social media platform X.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai congratulated the security forces on the encounter and said the State will be free from Maoism by March 2026.

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## DIFFERENCES WITH PAKISTAN

# Neutral expert vindicates India stand on Indus treaty: MEA

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

INDIA ON Tuesday welcomed World Bank-appointed neutral expert Michel Lino's announcement that deciding on the differences between India and Pakistan over two key hydroelectric projects under the Indus Waters Treaty would be within his competence.

"The decision upholds and vindicates India's stand that all the seven questions that were referred to the neutral expert, in relation to the Kishenganga and the Ratle hydroelectric projects, are differences falling within his competence under the Treaty," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

In a statement Monday, Lino said, "Having carefully considered and analysed the Parties' submissions... The Neutral Expert accordingly finds that he should proceed to render a decision on the merits of the Points of Difference."

"In the light of the foregoing, the Neutral Expert also finds no need to address Pakistan's second alternative submission," it added.

India is constructing two hydel power projects—Kishenganga HEP on Kishenganga river, a tributary of Jhelum, and Ratle HEP on the Chenab. In 2015, Pakistan, objecting to their design features, moved the World Bank to seek a settlement through a neutral expert, but withdrew its request a year later and asked for adjudication through a Court of Arbitration instead. India, for its part, moved an application for a neutral expert to rule on the dispute.

In October 2022, the World Bank responded by appointing both — a neutral expert and a Court of Arbitration. India opposed it, saying it could not be "compelled to recognise illegal and parallel proceedings not envisaged by the Treaty" and boycotted the court hearings.

EXPLAINED

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Sharing rivers

SIGNED IN 1960, the Indus Waters Treaty sought to ensure equitable water distribution amid growing tensions between India and Pakistan. India was granted unrestricted access to the water from the 'Eastern Rivers' — the Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi — and Pakistan retained rights to the waters from the 'Western Rivers' Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab.

Lino's announcement on being the competent authority "comports with India's view," the MEA statement said.

"It has been India's consistent and principled position that the Neutral Expert alone has the competence under the Treaty to decide (on) these differences. Having upheld his own competence, which comports with India's view, the Neutral Expert will now proceed to the next (merits) phase of his proceeding. This phase will culminate in a final decision on the merits of each of the seven differences," the MEA said, adding India will continue to participate in the neutral expert process so that the differences are resolved in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Treaty.

The MEA reiterated that India and Pakistan also remain in touch on the matter of modification and review of the Indus Waters Treaty, under Article XII (3) of the Treaty.

Last year, 64 years after the Indus Waters Treaty was signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960, India sent a formal notice to Pakistan seeking its "review and modification" — an escalation that underlined the intention to revoke the treaty and renegotiate it.



# India, France to work together on maritime surveillance in IOR

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

India and France have agreed to explore opportunities for coordinated surveillance whilst deployed to counter threats to the maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The two countries also committed to supporting each other in maritime security engagements.

“Both sides agreed to strengthen existing mechanisms of cooperation such as implementation of the agreed framework of exchange of information through enhanced information exchange between Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region, Gurugram and Regional Coordination Operations Centre, Seychelles and Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre, Madagascar in the IOR,”

**Threats such as piracy, contraband smuggling and illegal fishing to be monitored**

the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement after the seventh India-France maritime cooperation dialogue held recently.

India and France agreed to develop a joint assessment of the threats to maritime security in the region; to counter illicit maritime activities, including piracy and armed robbery, maritime terrorism, contraband smuggling, illegal and unregulated fishing, hybrid as well as cyber security threats and marine pollution, the Ministry said. Officials said the efforts for coordinated surveillance will be to address these kind of threats.

# India, France discuss civil nuclear issues ahead of PM's visit to Paris

**Suhasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

India and France have agreed to boost cooperation in “high-end technology sectors”, as senior officials held Foreign Office consultations in Paris, and discussed long-pending civil nuclear cooperation issues ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit next month.

A delegation, led by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and including newly appointed Indian Ambassador to France Sanjeev Singla, met French Secretary-General for Europe and Foreign Affairs Anne-Marie Descôtes and French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot.

Mr. Modi will travel to Paris for a Summit for Action on Artificial Intelligence on February 10 and 11. Officials also discussed the Prime Minister's pro-



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri with Secretary-General of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs Anne-Marie Descôtes. PTI

gramme and bilateral agenda during the visit. Last week, a French Minister had announced that India will “co-chair” the summit.

Mr. Misri and Ms. Descôtes held a meeting of the India-France Special Task Force on Civil Nuclear Energy, which was decided during Mr. Macron's visit to India last January. In the joint statement issued a

year ago, the two sides had agreed to convene the Special Task Force “within three months”.

## Jaitapur project

In particular, talks between the two sides have not resolved issues on the much-delayed Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project in Maharashtra, despite a revised techno-commercial

offer being made by French energy company EDF (Electricite De France) in 2022.

India and France signed a civil nuclear agreement in 2008 and inked the first MoU for the 990-MW Jaitapur plant in 2009. Officials have said that the high project cost, time overruns and the continuing logjam over India's civil liability law (Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010) are among the issues still being discussed on the Jaitapur project, even as India and France look towards cooperating on Small Modular Reactor in the future.

In a statement issued after the talks, the Ministry of External Affairs said that the two sides held talks on a number of areas of bilateral cooperation including “defence, civil nuclear energy, space, cyber and digital and AI”.

**ESTIMATED 1,100 INDIANS WERE DEPORTED IN 2023-2024**

# Deportation shadow falls on over 20,000 ‘undocumented’ Indians

**JAY MAZOOMDAAR**

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

IN HIS crackdown on immigration announced on his Day One, US President Donald Trump may have flagged the southern border with Mexico and criminal cartels, but there is a sense of unease in New Delhi as well.

For, even as Indians get most of the work H-1B visas and an estimated 300,000 Indian students are in the US — the largest cohort from any foreign country — there is a cloud over the plight of over 20,000.

Indeed, if the Trump Administration moves on deportations, among the first affected could be the 20,407 “undocu-

mented” Indians, as of November 2024, who are either facing “final removal orders” or are, currently, in detention centres of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Of these, 17,940 “paperless” Indians are not in detention but are under “final removal orders,” and another 2,467 are in detention

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# ● Deportation shadow falls on over 20,000 'undocumented' Indians

under the ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO).

This makes Indians the fourth largest group by nationality, and the first among Asians, in ICE custody. As of November 2024, the total number of non-citizens, from all countries, detained added up to over 37,000.

A removal order is issued by an immigration judge which becomes a "final removal order" when affirmed by the appellate authority.

Incidentally, ICE has named India with Iraq, South Sudan, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the list of 15 "uncooperative" countries reluctant to accept their "undocumented" citizens back from the US.

Classification as "uncooperative," covers: "hindering" ICE's "removal" efforts by refusing to conduct consular interviews; refusing to accept charter removal missions; delaying removal proceedings.

According to ICE's 2024 Annual Report, the number of Indians deported has already jumped five-fold in four years: from 292 in 2021 to 1,529 in 2024.

However, deportation data is often computed loosely. Sharing information on a charter flight that brought back an unspecified number of 'undocumented' adult Indians to Punjab last October, an assistant secretary

with the Department of Homeland Security put the number of Indians repatriated through charter and commercial flights between October 2023 and September 2024 at 1,100.

On December 6, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh told Lok Sabha that "as per US Government data, a total of 519 Indian nationals were deported to India" between November 2023 and October 2024.

The apparent discrepancies possibly stem from the inclusion of voluntary returns, departures and withdrawals — cases where a non-citizen is allowed to leave the US or withdraw an application for admission without any immigration consequences — in ICE's removal records, along with repatriations executed under final removal orders.

Non-citizens can appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) in the US against an order of removal issued by an immigration judge. If the BIA affirms the immigration judge's order of removal, it becomes administratively final.

However, there are many cases where ERO is unable to get someone deported even with a final order of removal. In certain cases, non-citizens get relief or protection from removal under the Convention Against Torture or by establishing threats of persecution in the home country.

# Trump declares end to U.S. citizenship by birth

Democratic-led States challenge order that could affect thousands of Indians in the U.S.; President also threatens 100% tariffs on BRICS countries if they attempt to move to 'non-dollar' transactions

**Suhasini Haidar**

NEW DELHI

Shortly after being sworn in on Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order cancelling the provision of "citizenship by birth", which could directly affect thousands of Indian professionals working in the U.S. under H-1B and other temporary visas, who hoped to raise their families there.

Mr. Trump also said he planned to levy "100% taxes" on BRICS countries for attempting to move to "non-dollar" transactions, referring to the 10-nation grouping of emerging economies that includes India.

"As a BRICS nation, they'll have a 100% tariff if they so much as even think about doing what they



**Signing spree:** U.S. President Trump throws pens used to sign Executive Orders to the crowd in Washington on Monday. AP

thought, and therefore they will give it up immediately," he said, erroneously referring to Spain as a BRICS member.

In addition, Mr. Trump's plans to crack down on undocumented and illegal immigrants could hit about 7.25 lakh Indians, of which nearly 18,000 are already

on a "final list for removal" or deportations.

## Move challenged

A coalition of 18 Democratic-led States along with the District of Columbia and city of San Francisco filed a lawsuit in federal court in Boston on Tuesday arguing that the Republican Presi-

dent's effort to end birthright citizenship was a flagrant violation of the U.S. Constitution.

As concerns grew in India over the announcements, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was set to meet incoming U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio to discuss priorities for the India-U.S. bilateral relationship and the Quad.

The one-on-one meeting, which would be Mr. Rubio's first with any foreign dignitary, was due to take place on Tuesday afternoon in Washington, following a meeting of the Quad Foreign Ministers.

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# Trump declares end to birthright citizenship

The Quad Foreign Ministers are expected to discuss dates for the Quad Summit to be held in India later this year, while during the bilateral meeting Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Rubio would discuss Mr. Trump's visit to India and taking forward the strategic partnership, as well as the concerns over immigration and tariffs.

Mr. Rubio will meet State Department employees and then hold talks with all Quad Foreign Ministers. The meeting of the Indo-Pacific grouping, that China has criticised, is significant as it is Mr. Rubio's first foreign policy engagement.

On Monday, Mr. Jaishankar was accorded a front-row aisle seat right in front of the podium where Mr. Trump took oath.

Mr. Rubio's decision to meet the Quad Foreign Ministers first is also important as it comes amid Mr. Trump's own outreach to China, including an invitation to Chinese President Xi Jinping for the inaugural ceremony on Monday, which Chinese Vice-Premier Han Zheng attended.

Mr. Rubio, known for his tough views on China, has been banned from travelling there and was sanctioned twice by Beijing over his comments criticising Chinese human rights violations.

*(With inputs from Reuters)*

# Trump's exit from Paris Agreement 'threatens' future of renewable energy

**Jacob P. Koshy**

NEW DELHI

On Monday, the first day of his second Presidency, Donald Trump signed an executive order to withdraw the U.S. from the historic 2015 Paris climate agreement.

The withdrawal of the world's second largest polluter would further undermine the losing battle to keep global emissions in line to prevent global temperatures from rising by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, and the future of renewable energy, say experts.

In 2016, when Mr. Trump won the election and had moved to withdraw the U.S. from the pact, the exit did not formally take place, thanks to the way the Paris Agree-



**Near miss:** Donald Trump had tried to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Accord in 2016 when he first came to power. AFP

ment rules were framed.

However, this time, the U.S. can exit within a year of formally conveying this to the UN, which Mr. Trump did on Monday.

"It remains to be seen how matters will play out this time. Despite President Trump's withdrawal, there have been large delegations of U.S. observers

who have participated in every climate meet and play a significant role. Should Trump bar their participation in future meets things would be different," T. Jayaraman, Senior Fellow, Climate Change, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, told *The Hindu*.

Given Mr. Trump's sup-

port for oil and gas drilling, experts say a greater cause of concern was over what his second term would hold for investments in renewable technology.

"Multilateral Development Banks are unlikely to continue focusing on climate finance, which is essential for developing countries. Given the veto the U.S. holds in the World Bank, it may force the World Bank to move away from climate financing," said Labanya Jena, sustainable finance specialist.

Other experts have warned of ecological consequences. "The bigger risk is the exploitation of sensitive regions such as Alaska, which are detrimental to global climate stability," said Manjeet Puri, of The Energy Resources Institute.



# Dhaka vows to pursue Hasina's return, may seek global support

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DHAKA, JANUARY 21

BANGLADESH'S INTERIM government on Tuesday said it will continue its efforts to bring deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina back from India and will seek international intervention if necessary.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul told reporters at the Secretariat here that if New Delhi refuses to return Hasina, it would constitute a violation of the extradition treaty between Bangladesh and India, the Daily Star newspaper reported.

Hasina, 77, has been living in India since August 5 last year when she fled Bangladesh following a massive student-led protest that toppled her Awami League's (AL) 16-year regime. Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) has issued arrest warrants for Hasina and several former Cabinet ministers, advisers, and military and civil officials for "crimes against humanity and genocide".

Last year, Dhaka sent a diplomatic note to New Delhi seeking the extradition of Hasina.

"We have written a letter for extradition. If India does not extradite Sheikh Hasina, it will be a clear violation of the extradition treaty between Bangladesh and India," Nazrul said.

In that case, he said, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will take necessary steps to address the matter within the international community. The foreign ministry is also making efforts and a red alert has already been issued, the law adviser added.

"We are doing everything we can. The government will continue all efforts to bring Sheikh Hasina back. If necessary, inter-



Hasina, 77, has been living in India since August 5 last year

EXPLAINED

## Provisions of extradition treaty

UNDER THE provisions of the India-Bangladesh extradition treaty, extradition may be refused if the offence is one of a "political character". Another clause said a person convicted of an extradition offence may not be extradited unless the person was sentenced to imprisonment or other form of detention for a period of four months or more.

national support will be sought," Nazrul said.

The relations between India and Bangladesh came under strain after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus came to power.

India has been expressing concerns over attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in that country.

In recent weeks, Hasina has also accused the Yunus-led interim government of perpetrating "genocide" and failing to protect minorities, especially Hindus, since her ouster.



## 'AMERICA FIRST TRADE POLICY'

# Trump policy: Fix 'unfair, unbalanced trade, counter currency manipulation'

RAVIDUTTAMISHRA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Monday instructed his commerce and treasury departments to investigate the causes of America's "large and persistent" annual trade deficits in goods, as well as the "economic and national security" implications of such deficits, according to an official document titled 'America First Trade Policy' released by the White House on Monday.

This holds significance for India, which recorded a \$50 billion trade surplus with the US in 2023 compared to \$25 billion in 2019.

Indian trade policy researchers have highlighted that India's consumer goods exports, such as pharmaceuticals, gems and jewellery, and marine products, are particularly vulnerable to US tariffs due to the trade imbalance.

During his first term, Trump had invoked national security provisions to impose 25 per cent tariffs on steel and 10 per cent on aluminium from India and other countries and had revoked the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), a preferential trade agreement which benefited India the most. "The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Homeland Security, shall investigate the feasibility of establishing and recommend the best methods for designing, building, and implementing an External Revenue Service (ERS) to collect tariffs, duties, and other foreign trade-related revenues," the White House stated.

Trump also directed the United



US President Donald Trump after signing executive orders inside the Capital One Arena on the inauguration day of his second presidential term, in Washington on Monday. Reuters

States Trade Representative (USTR) to review existing US trade agreements and sectoral trade agreements and to "recommend any revisions that may be necessary" or appropriate to achieve or maintain the general level of reciprocal and mutually advantageous concessions with respect to free trade agreement partner countries. Notably, India, the US and 12 other members including Australia, Indonesia and Japan signed an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), a regional agreement to increase economic integration and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. India is a signatory of three pillars of IPEF: supply chains, clean economy, and fair economy.

### Focus on trade deficit with China

The White House instructed the USTR to review the economic and trade agreement between the US and China to determine whether the latter is adhering to its commitments under the agree-

ment. "The USTR shall recommend appropriate actions to be taken based on the findings of this review, up to and including the imposition of tariffs or other measures as needed," the White House statement read.

Notably, Trump has appointed China sceptic, Jamieson Greer as the US Trade Representative (USTR). Greer, a former military officer and international trade attorney, is expected to carry forward the trade policies of Trump's first term. The announcement followed speculation that Robert Lighthizer, the architect of Trump's tariff war, might serve a second term as USTR. However, Greer, known as Lighthizer's protégé, is anticipated to play a similar role, having previously served as Trump's first term.

China's exports gained momentum in December, pushing year-on-year growth in 2024 up by 5.9 per cent to \$3.58 trillion, according to customs data released

by Beijing on Monday. Imports, however, grew at a slower pace of 1.1 per cent to \$2.59 trillion, resulting in a trade surplus of \$992.2 billion for the year.

"The Secretary of Commerce and the United States Trade Representative shall assess legislative proposals regarding Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with the PRC and make recommendations regarding any proposed changes to such legislative proposals," the White House said.

If the US decides to revoke China's PNTR status, it would result in a tariff increase on all Chinese goods entering the US.

### Target on China's currency manipulation

The White House has indicated that US measures to address the trade gap with China will extend beyond tariffs. "The Secretary of the Treasury shall recommend appropriate measures to counter currency manipulation or misalignment that prevents effective balance of payments adjustments or that provides trading partners with an unfair competitive advantage in international trade, and shall identify any countries that he believes should be designated as currency manipulators," the White House stated.

The US on multiple occasions said that China has taken concrete steps to devalue its currency and the purpose of China's currency devaluation is to gain an unfair competitive advantage in international trade. According to the US Treasury, China should pursue more market-based economic reforms to bolster growth and confidence in its currency.

## Global tax deal has 'no force or effect' in US, says Trump

Washington: US President Donald Trump on Monday declared that a global corporate minimum tax deal "has no force or effect" in the US, effectively pulling America out of the 2021 arrangement negotiated by the Biden administration with nearly 140 countries.

Trump, in a presidential memorandum, also ordered the US Treasury to prepare options for "protective measures" against countries that have — or are likely to — put in place tax rules that disproportionately affect American companies. The European Union, Britain and other countries have adopted the 15 per cent global corporate minimum tax, but the US Congress never approved measures to bring the US into compliance with it. The US has a roughly 10 per cent global minimum tax, part of Trump's landmark 2017 tax cut package approved by Republicans. But countries that have adopted the 15 per cent global minimum tax may be in a position to collect a "top-up" tax from US companies paying a lower rate. Trump's memo referred to such actions as "retaliatory."

"Because of the Global Tax Deal and other discriminatory foreign tax practices, American companies may face retaliatory international tax regimes if the United States does not comply with foreign tax policy objectives," the memo reads. REUTERS