

CJI criticises BCI's interference in 'dialogue' between him and students

Right to profession cannot be threatened for expressing dissent, says Chief Justice on plea seeking urgent hearing on BCI directive to stop enrolment of NALSAR's 2026 batch; SC bars coercive actions by Council against the students, seeks affidavit

Krishnadass Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Friday questioned the motives behind an aborted move by the Bar Council of India to stop the professional enrolment of the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR) batch of 2026, terming it an unwarranted interference in the ongoing "dialogue" between him and the students who do not want him as the chief guest for their convocation ceremony.

"Who is the Bar Council of India (BCI) to come between the students and me? The Bar Council of India has no business here... It is a dialogue between the students and me. Why is the BCI unnecessarily interfering?" asked Chief Justice Kant, heading a three-judge Bench, during a hearing against the BCI's actions.

The court barred the BCI from taking any coercive actions against NALSAR students and staff and gave the Council two weeks to explain its directives.

The students had written to the law university's administration, expressing their antipathy towards in-



viting the Chief Justice. Their objection had followed nationwide outrage over the CJI's oral remarks referring to certain individuals as "parasites" and "cockroaches". The students had also found offensive the top judge's disinclination to view videos of police brutality against students protesting the NEET-UG paper leaks in Delhi.

On Thursday, BCI chairperson Manan Kumar Mishra, who is a BJP MP and senior advocate, wrote to the NALSAR Vice-Chancellor seeking a report identifying the persons behind the "campaign" against the CJI. The same letter prohibited State Bar Councils from enrolling any "2026-passed out student" from NALSAR.

The letter was quickly dropped in the face of intense public criticism. A second BCI communication,

issued within just two hours of the first one, declared the "vast majority" of NALSAR students "innocent", but retained the direction to NALSAR to inquire and submit a report on the people behind the protest. NALSAR had released a statement that it would have to look into the constitutionality of such an inquiry. The BCI eventually withdrew its letters entirely on Friday.

'Chilling effect'

However, the withdrawal of the letters did not stop the Supreme Court from condemning the BCI. Chief Justice Kant said the fundamental right to a profession cannot be threatened for expressing dissent.

"I was involved in student activities and campaigns too," the Chief Justice said.

The court was hearing

an oral mentioning by senior advocate K. Parameshwar, appearing for two former NALSAR students, seeking an urgent hearing and judicial action against the BCI.

"By launching into a fishing expedition and seeking to set up a case of wrongdoing from a genuine expression of grievance by students on a matter internal to the university, the BCI letters create a chilling effect on the freedom of speech, expression, and association among students. Legal education creates the space for questioning and courageous expression of one's ideas," Mr. Parameshwar submitted.

The court barred the BCI from taking coercive actions against NALSAR students, faculty, and administrators on the basis of the incidents mentioned in the BCI letters. The court gave the BCI two weeks to file an affidavit explaining its actions.

The petition said neither the Advocates Act, 1961, nor the BCI's Rules of Legal Education permit the BCI to regulate students' conduct or direct universities to "inquire" against them. The BCI's powers extended only to advocates and for prescribing standards of le-

gal education, it said. "The BCI has no jurisdiction over the admission of persons as advocates on the rolls of the State Bar Councils," the petition said.

BCI overreach

Mr. Parameshwar submitted that the BCI letters virtually attempted to add "expression of dissent" as a ground for disqualification for enrolment as an advocate. A person can be stopped from enrolment only in cases of conviction for offences involving moral turpitude or under the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955, or in case of dismissal from government service on a charge involving moral turpitude, he said.

The petition compared the current overreach of the BCI to an earlier episode when it had tried to bar anyone above 45 years of age from enrolling as an advocate. The Supreme Court had struck down the rule introduced by the BCI in a 1995 judgment in *Indian Council of Legal Aid & Advice v. Bar Council of India*.

Mr. Parameshwar said even the modification and ultimate withdrawal of the letters would not undo the "chilling effect" caused by the actions of the BCI.

Kharge slams Centre over 'Chinese activity' in Arunachal Pradesh

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday sought answers from the Narendra Modi government over reports of an alleged expansion of Chinese presence in sensitive areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

"After Galwan, now Arunachal Pradesh?" Mr. Kharge said in a post on X, describing reports that China was attempting to "push further" into areas of Arunachal Pradesh as disturbing, and demanding immediate answers from the government.

Mr. Kharge asked whether the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had expanded its presence near Taksing and whether India had lost regular access to Shera-5, a designated Patrolling Point. He also questioned why Indian patrolling was reportedly limited during winter in the sensitive sector while the PLA maintained a year-round presence.

He also sought an explanation for reports that traditional grazing and hunting grounds were becoming inaccessible to local communities.

Mr. Kharge also questioned the government over the status of the India-China disengagement in eastern Ladakh, asking



Mallikarjun Kharge

whether the pre-May 2020 status quo ante had been fully restored.

He accused the BJP government of hiding facts about the situation on the ground and asked whether India retained full access to all areas and Patrolling Points that its forces had accessed before May 2020. "After 20 of our brave soldiers made the supreme sacrifice in Galwan in 2020, none less than PM Modi gave China a 'CLEAN CHIT', emboldening their transgressions!" Mr. Kharge wrote on X.

He said the government's record on the issue "inspires no confidence" and demanded that Prime Minister Modi, the Defence Minister, and the Home Minister address the reported developments.

Mr. Kharge, however, said the Congress had "complete faith" in the courage and capability of the Indian Armed Forces.

Nagaland church body opposes order to sing *Vande Mataram* at Independence Day events

Rahul Karmakar

GUWAHATI

The Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) has opposed the Centre's order to play or sing the revised version of *Vande Mataram*, the National Song, at official events to mark India's 80th Independence Day.

The church body's opposition follows the Naga Students' Federation's call to ensure that schools and other educational institutions do not send their students to participate in the I-Day programmes. The students' body also said students who decline to sing *Vande Mataram* "on grounds of conscience or religious beliefs" should

not face disciplinary action or discrimination.

In a statement on Thursday evening, the NBCC said it was against any directive or practice that seeks to compel citizens, particularly Christians, to sing *Vande Mataram*. It maintained that patriotism should arise from willing participation and a shared love for the nation rather than compulsion.

At the same time, the church body called upon all stakeholders to express their positions peacefully and constructively, cautioning that disagreement over national symbols or patriotic practices should not become a source of communal tension or so-

cial division.

The NBCC said it fully respects national symbols, patriotic sentiments, and the constitutional values of India. However, it insisted that matters concerning faith, conscience, religious conviction, and deeply held identity require "the highest degree of sensitivity, wisdom, and respect."

'Compelling citizens'

"National unity cannot be strengthened by compelling citizens to participate in an expression that, for reasons of faith or conscience, they may not be able to embrace," the NBCC said, reminding the Centre that India is a plural and diverse nation.



INDIA'S JOINT COMMAND PUSH ENTERS DECISIVE PHASE:

Why Integrated Theatre Commands Could Soon Become Reality

India's plan to reorganise its military under Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs) appears to be entering a decisive phase, with the government considering the final restructuring roadmap and the armed forces moving steadily towards greater jointness.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi first placed the broader vision of a more integrated military at the centre of defence reform in his August 15, 2019, Independence Day address, stating that India could no longer afford a fragmented approach to military power. The creation of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Department of Military Affairs followed, with theatre commands identified as a key next step.

At its core, theatrisation means bringing Army, Navy and Air Force capabilities assigned to a particular geographical or strategic theatre under one operational commander. Instead of individual services planning and fighting largely through separate command structures, forces would operate as a single joint formation.

The urgency is being driven by the changing character of warfare. Future conflicts are unlikely to remain confined to land, sea or air. Cyber operations, satellites, artificial intelligence, drones, autonomous systems, long-range precision weapons and information warfare are increasingly

interconnected. India's military therefore needs to generate effects across several domains simultaneously.

That is where integrated commands become important. A unified commander could reduce delays in inter-service coordination, improve the use of scarce assets and enable faster operational decisions. Joint logistics and common planning could also reduce duplication and improve resource utilisation.

The reform already has an important legal foundation. The Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act, 2023 gives commanders of joint organisations authority over personnel from the three services, creating a framework for unified command and discipline.

The proposed architecture has included geographically focused theatres, including northern and Western Fronts, alongside a maritime command. Meanwhile, specialised tri-service capabilities in cyber, space, communications, drones and cognitive warfare are being developed.

Future wars will be contests of integration, of sensors, shooters, data, intelligence and decision-making. India's theatre command project is therefore an attempt to ensure that its Army, Navy and Air Force do not merely fight alongside one another but fight as one force.

INDIAN ARMY TRANSFORMS:

Building A Force for Future Warfare

From the traditional manpower-intensive model to a leaner, the Indian Army is transforming itself into technology-enabled force ready for the challenges of future warfare.

At the heart of this transformation is a battlefield where drones, artificial intelligence, electronic warfare, cyber capabilities and precision weapons increasingly determine the speed and outcome of operations. The Army is consequently working to integrate drones into formations while connecting surveillance, intelligence and strike capabilities through increasingly networked systems.

Drones have emerged as one of the clearest symbols of this change. Instead of treating unmanned systems as specialised equipment, the Army is moving towards a layered architecture combining surveillance drones, armed platforms and counter-drone systems with artillery, air defence, electronic warfare and intelligence assets. The objective is to detect threats faster, identify targets in real time and shorten the gap between finding a target and engaging it.

The lessons of Operation Sindoor further reinforced this approach. The operation underlined the need for real-time intelligence, precision engagement, unmanned systems and coordinated response in a rapidly evolving conflict. For the Army, the experience has strengthened the case for preparing for short, intense wars in which technological superiority can be decisive.

Structural changes are accompanying the technological shift. New formations and capabilities, including Bhairav Battalions, Rudra All Arms Brigades, Ashni Platoons, Shaktibaan Regiments and Divyastra Batteries, are part

of efforts to create more agile and specialised combat formations. The continuing development of Integrated Battle Groups also reflects the move towards faster mobilisation and combined-arms operations.

Indigenisation is another crucial pillar. Through partnerships with DRDO, Indian industry, startups and MSMEs, the Army is seeking domestic solutions in drones, counter-drone technology, artificial intelligence, communications and precision weapons. This reduces



dependence on foreign supply chains while encouraging faster innovation.

The transformation is ultimately about changing how the Army fights. Future battlefields will span physical, digital, electromagnetic and cognitive domains.

The Indian Army's challenge, and its opportunity, is to ensure that technology, organisation and the soldier evolve together into a force capable of responding faster, striking more precisely and adapting continuously.

Internet unbound

India's social media now resemble China's tightly controlled cyberspace

The Union government has summoned Facebook and Instagram parent Meta, and given senior staff from the firm a dressing down. Publicly, the reason is the brief removal, in India, of a video message by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, the government is hardly making a secret of its intent to nudge Meta to suppress posts of protests such as the one at Jantar Mantar. A barrage of takedown notices have already erased or suppressed some of the more emblematic forms of the protests. Instagram Reels, where users are shown automatically recommended posts from various creators, have emerged as one of the most influential forms of mass media in the country. Seeking suppression of political speech on such a platform would put India in unenviable company, joining the ranks of Pakistan, where TikTok was banned for some time in 2021 until it agreed to “control immoral/ indecent content”. More importantly, it would bring India much closer to the tightly controlled digital ecosystem of China, where nearly all dissent is wiped out in mere minutes. All that possibly stands in the way of India's cyberspace drifting to that status quo is a lack of capacity to check posts in real time, a “problem” that is ripe for a destructive AI-based solution.

Meta is no bastion of resistance in spite of being a central site of the mobilisations over the last few weeks. For months, it has crawled when asked to bend, by needlessly taking down every post referred to it under Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000, a censorship route that merely notifies platforms that the reporting agency feels the content referred to is illegal. Despite posts taken down under this section almost never going to court, Meta has uniformly chosen to comply automatically. This has set the stage for the arm-twisting that the government appears to be undertaking. The conditions that enabled widespread censorship in China were fostered over the decades preceding the Internet's growth. In the absence of those conditions, and in the absence of a single-party system with a stated ideological commitment to centralise control, the Internet cannot be tamed. But warping the public's cultural self-perception is damaging for society, and must be stopped. These draconian measures can be used by successive governments if left unchecked. The current dispensation has drawn the wrong lesson from the protests and the accompanying online zeitgeist. Mass mobilisations are the lifeblood of democracy, not an aberration that bears no repetition.

Island administration looking at data centre project on Nicobar

Abhinav Lakshman

NEW DELHI

The Andaman and Nicobar administration has floated an expression of interest (EoI) inviting feasibility proposals for the establishment of a private-sector-led "Green AI/ Data Centre Vertical" in the islands.

The move comes amid opposition from local tribal communities to a proposed ₹91,000-crore mega infrastructure project on the Great Nicobar Island (GNI).

As per the EoI, the potential areas identified for the project are the Hutbay Sea Area and Netaji Nagar Sea Area on Little Andaman, and the Campbell Bay, Anderson Bay, Vijay Nagar Bay, and Gandhi Nagar Bay Sea areas on the Great Nicobar Island.

The August 10 EoI comes even as the administration is holding meetings with local tribal communities on the GNI over finalis-



The Campbell Bay in Great Nicobar island is one of the potential areas identified for the data centre project. AFP

ing the draft master plan of the project, which includes a transshipment port and airport. The draft plan was first released to the public earlier this year.

The sea areas identified for the data centre project are along bays that have been marked for development of one of two wildlife corridors (Gandhi Nagar Bay), agriculture, biodiversity tourism, and fish and poultry (Anderson Bay), coastal and business tou-

risms activities (Vijay Nagar Bay), and residential pockets, institutional and administrative buildings (Campbell Bay) under the draft master plan.

Locals unaware

Officials in the administration involved in preparing the draft master plan told *The Hindu* that they are not aware of any discussions about accommodating such a data centre project as part of the GNI

development. Members of the Tribal Council of Great and Little Nicobar who met with the Nicobar administration on Thursday to discuss the draft master plan further said they had been given no information about a data centre project. "We only met them for 15 minutes, and they asked us how much buffer area we needed near Rajiv Nagar and New Chingenh settlements. We told them that we need to survey the areas and see, even as the officials said provisions are being made for 30 metre to 100 metre buffer areas around these settlements," a council member said.

In the EoI, the island administration has noted that the feasibility proposals may include solutions for "renewable energy-powered data centre operations" that use "freshwater-free" cooling solutions such as "seawater-based or other innovative cooling systems".

India helps China evade tariffs, claims U.S. report

White House report identifies more than 40 countries through which Chinese exporters route goods; it names 'Pune-Gujarat-Chennai' belt as one of the areas 'enabling' China to evade U.S. tariffs

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
WASHINGTON

India is once again in U.S. crosshairs, this time for allegedly allowing China to evade U.S. tariffs by routing its exports through the country. The latest allegations are part of a new White House report called 'The Great Transshipment Scam'.

In particular, the U.S. has named "the Pune-Gujarat-Chennai belt" as one of the areas "enabling" China to evade tariffs to the detriment of supply chains in the U.S.

This comes at a time when the U.S. has already imposed a 10% tariff on India for not doing enough to stop the import of goods made using forced labour, and is in the process of enacting legislation that

Tariff maze

The White House report comes at a time when the U.S. has imposed a 10% tariff on India over forced-labour concerns



- The report alleges India is among 40 countries helping China evade U.S. tariffs

- India is among the top-tier 'enablers' named, along with Mexico, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and the European Union

- The report has not yet specified any punitive actions the U.S. could take based on these findings

would see tariffs of up to 100% imposed on India for its import of Russian oil.

The U.S. had in 2018 levied tariffs ranging from 7.5% to 100% on goods from China under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 for unfair trade and tech practices. On July 24, 2026, it added a further 12.5% tariff for forced-labour compliance gaps.

"After their imposition,

Chinese exporters increasingly routed goods through third countries," the White House report noted. "Products that previously moved directly from China to the U.S. were shipped through jurisdictions where limited assembly, finishing, repackaging, relabelling, or documentation changes could create the appearance of a different national origin."

The report has identified more than 40 countries associated with "elevated illegal transshipment risk", with India among the top "enablers" of China's evasion of tariffs. "The Pune-Gujarat-Chennai production belt absorbs pumps and compressors... affecting supply chains in Cincinnati, Dayton, and Columbus," it said.

"The [40-odd] countries that comprise China's Shadow Transshipment Network include many of America's largest trading partners," the report said.

"China's biggest enablers range from Mexico and Canada on U.S. land borders to the European Union, India, Japan, and South Korea."

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India helps China evade tariffs, claims U.S. report

The report classifies the 40-odd countries into three tiers based on how big a transgressor the U.S. feels they are. The top tier comprises “countries and trading blocs that account for large absolute volumes of China-linked goods while maintaining diversified industrial bases and major U.S.-bound export platforms”.

The report added that in these economies, illegal transshipment risk is embedded within broad legitimate trade flows. This Tier 1 includes Canada, the European Union, India, Israel, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, and Taiwan.

How the scam supposedly works

The report goes on to explain that tariff arbitrage lies at the heart of this transshipment arrangement. When a Chinese product that faces a high U.S. tariff is routed through a country with a lower tariff rate, that difference simultaneously becomes a loss of revenue for the U.S. government and a profit for the exporter.

“Such tariff arbitrage creates the financial engine behind the Great Transshipment Scam,” the report added. “The savings are more than sufficient to finance the capital equipment, logistics infrastructure, light assembly plants, repackaging operations, and ‘screwdriver factories’ needed to support the scam across Southeast Asia, Mexico, India, and Eastern Europe.”

It added that such assembly factories are designed for tariff evasion and tariff avoidance rather than true manufacturing.

“The Office of Trade and Economic Analysis estimates that approximately \$67 billion in U.S.-bound goods were transshipped from China through the top hubs,” the report said.

Lower oil prices, not Iran's nuclear programme, now top priority: U.S.

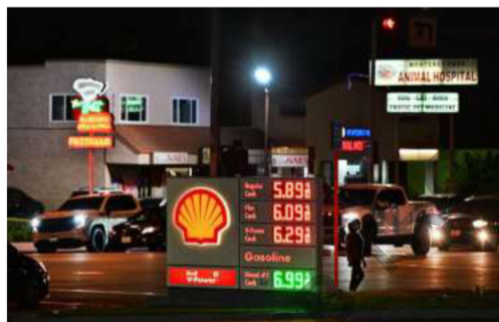
'Goal number one is to keep oil and gas cheap for Americans; and then obviously goal number two is ensure that Iran never gets a nuclear weapon,' says Vice President J.D. Vance; the U.S. is set to announce new 'economic punishment' for Iran soon

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

The top U.S. priority now in the Iran war is no longer its nuclear programme but to bring gasoline prices down for American consumers, the Vice-President said on Thursday, with the Treasury Secretary adding that new economic punishment to wear down Tehran is imminent.

The comments by Vice President J.D. Vance and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent illustrate the powerful leverage Tehran has gained by shutting down the Strait of Hormuz.

Preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon – consistently touted by President Donald Trump as his main reason for the war – now takes a back seat to getting oil flowing again freely through the strait, Mr. Vance said on Fox News.



Fuel prices are seen listed as motorists make their way during the evening commute in Monterey Park, California, on Thursday. AFP

His comments underscored the stark reality that the war now centres on control of the Strait of Hormuz, the critical fuel supply conduit that was open before Mr. Trump started the war along with Israel in late February.

Iran has all but shut it down in retaliation and thus found a crucial bargaining chip against Mr. Trump as he struggles to find a way out of the war

and shies away from resuming large-scale attacks.

The 80-year-old President's approval rating is plummeting, the war is unpopular among Americans and midterm elections are approaching in November.

Republicans fear Mr. Trump and the war, which has caused gasoline prices to soar, will cost them their control of Congress.

"I know that oil is down today and it's way down

from the highs in the early days of the conflict," Mr. Vance said on Fox News. "That's goal number one – keep oil and gas cheap for Americans all over our country. And then obviously goal number two is ensure that Iran never gets a nuclear weapon." He has been among the members of the administration most sceptical of the offensive launched against Iran in late February.

Cautious approach

These remarks, however, appear to confirm the more cautious approach now favoured by the U.S. President, which involves maintaining strong economic pressure on Iran by blockading its ports and preventing it from selling oil. Heralding more economic punishment, Bessent threatened to subject Iran to economic isolation "like the world has never seen before". He said new

measures are expected next week. Only days ago Mr. Trump had said an agreement to reopen the strait was imminent.

"We are low-keying it," Mr. Trump said Sunday. "We are only semi-negotiating with them. We are just watching Iran with its huge inflation and the fact they have no money," Mr. Trump said.

The U.S. military reportedly burned through stockpiles of costly high-tech missiles and other weapons in the months since the war started at a cost of billions and is now reportedly running low, limiting Mr. Trump's options for resuming attacks on Iran.

"Sometimes we're focused on the energy piece of it because we want Americans to be able to afford the price of oil and gas. Sometimes we're obviously focused on the military... on the nuclear program," Mr. Vance also said.

HEGSETH SAYS U.S. CAN MAINTAIN NAVAL BLOCKADE IN HORMUZ 'INDEFINITELY'

US vows tougher sanctions on Iran as 2 ships hit in Strait

UAE says Tehran attacked 2 vessels transiting Hormuz

Reuters

London, Panama City,
August 14

TRANSIT THROUGH the Strait of Hormuz appeared to grind to a near standstill on Friday after two more ships were attacked there and the United States said it could maintain a naval blockade of Iran indefinitely.

A senior Iranian source said on Wednesday that there had been no progress in talks to build on a June agreement to end the war. Since the ceasefire renewed in the June deal broke down, Iran has resumed attacks on ships it accuses of trying to transit the strait without its permission.

The United Arab Emirates' Abu Dhabi National Oil Company said two of its vessels were attacked transiting the strait on Thursday evening. The UAE government blamed Iran, which made no immediate comment.

Two vessels passed through the narrow waterway on Friday, according to analysis from ship tracking firm Kpler: a grain ship



Pro-government demonstrators wave Iranian flags during a gathering in a Tehran square. REUTERS

entering Iranian waters and an empty dry bulk ship going in the other direction.

A separate empty liquefied petroleum products tanker was sailing into the Gulf via the strait, the data showed. There were no crude oil shipments visible on Friday. Nine vessels passed through the strait on Thursday, up from five on Wednesday but below the average of 12 for August.

Some ships may pass through undetected with their transponders off, but the figures are nowhere near the more than

130 ships that traversed the Strait of Hormuz daily before the war launched by the US and Israel on Iran in February.

"Alongside the threat to energy infrastructure in the region, Iran's ability to restrict shipping through the strait is its main source of leverage in negotiations," said Torbjorn Solvsted, principal Middle East analyst with risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth told reporters the US military has the capability to maintain a naval presence in the

region to enforce its retaliatory blockade of Iran, which has inflicted severe economic damage on the country.

"Indefinitely the United States Navy can maintain a blockade like that because we'll rotate ships in and out, as we have, and we'll continue to," Hegseth told reporters during a trip to Panama.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the United States planned to inflict more financial damage on Iran. "Watch this space for more announcements coming next week because we are going to apply measures like have never been seen in the history of economic isolation on a country," he said in an interview on *Newsmax*.

Trump has repeatedly asserted the US has "total control" over the strait. Iran rejects that, and has said it will not allow the waterway to reopen until conditions are met. These include removing economic sanctions and releasing frozen Iranian assets.

On Thursday, an Iranian parliamentary committee approved Iran's plan for the strait. It includes a provision banning the transit of US-, Israeli- and other "hostile" countries' assets and equipment, semi-official *Tasnim* news agency reported.

Israel's Katz calls for police to replace military in handling West Bank settlers

Agence France-Presse

QUSRA

Israel's Defence Minister called on Friday for the police to take over law enforcement in the occupied West Bank from the military, which has come under fire from the right-wing for trying to remove settlers harassing Palestinians.

The measure, if implemented, would be a step towards Israeli annexation of the occupied Palestinian territory – something several Ministers in Prime Mi-

nister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government openly call for.

The announcement comes almost a week into a siege by Israeli settlers who have blockaded Palestinians inside their homes in the northern West Bank, repeatedly returning despite attempts by the military to remove them.

Palestinian residents of three houses in Qusra near Nablus say they have been effectively cut off from food and other supplies since the siege began on



Israel Katz

Sunday. Against the backdrop of the blockade, Defence Minister Israel Katz's office announced he had "instructed the IDF to prepare a plan to transfer all

enforcement powers regarding civil matters among Israeli communities and population in Judea and Samaria to the Israel Police," using the Biblical term for the West Bank.

The military would continue to exercise power over Palestinian residents of the West Bank.

"The IDF's role is to fight Palestinian terrorism, focus on defending borders and communities against threats... and not chase boys on the hilltops," Mr. Katz said, referring to the Hilltop Youth.

Kushner, Board of Peace officials to visit Israel and Egypt for talks on Gaza

Associated Press

Washington, August 14

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump's son-in-law and negotiator Jared Kushner will travel to West Asia next week to try to advance plans for an end to conflict in Gaza after a deal recently announced by Trump administration ran into Israeli opposition.

An official with the Board of Peace, the body Trump established to oversee the fragile ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, said Kushner, board high representative Nickolay Mladenov, and executive board member and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair would arrive in Israel on Sunday.

The group will then travel to Cairo, where meetings of a Palestinian technocratic group set to assume control of Gaza under a US-brokered ceasefire deal have been taking place for the past several months, the official said. The trip was reported earlier by *Axios*.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the meetings would demonstrate the determination of Trump and the Board of Peace to "see peace, prosperity and sustainable security emerge" in a demilitarised Gaza where Hamas has ceded



EXPLAINED

Kushner steps in as Gaza deal stalls

Kushner's visit comes as a Gaza ceasefire deal, seen as a potential breakthrough, remains stalled. Based on an October truce that ended major military operations and secured the release of remaining hostages, the agreement now faces disagreements over Hamas' disarmament and Israel's withdrawal from region.

control to allow reconstruction of the devastated territory.

But Israel has dismissed a recent deal announced by Trump for Hamas to disarm and Israel to withdraw its forces from the Palestinian territory, marking a rare public display of friction with the Trump administration.

Though Hamas accepted the plan to decommission its weapons, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in recent days that Israel would not withdraw until Hamas has completely disarmed.

Russia rejects Black Sea truce as attacks on Ukraine continue

Reuters

London, August 14

RUSSIA ON Friday dismissed the idea of a ceasefire with Ukraine in the Black Sea, saying it saw no grounds for "half-measures" that would offer a respite to the other side.

Both Russia and Ukraine have stepped up attacks in recent weeks against commercial ships in the Black Sea, driving world grain prices higher. In a statement, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused Ukraine of "brazen acts of terrorism" against shipping, while making no mention of Russia's own attacks.

"We view these attacks (by Ukraine) as a deliberate policy aimed at destabilising civilian shipping in the Black Sea region to further escalate tensions and prolong the conflict, all with the blatant acquiescence of regional neighbours," Zakharova said.

"At the same time, we see no signs of improvement in the situation and, consequently, no grounds for half-measures that merely grant the Kyiv regime a temporary breathing space."

Zakharova said she was commenting on a statement by Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan

Fidan in a media interview that Ankara had put proposals to both Russia and Ukraine for a moratorium on military operations in the Black Sea.

Earlier Friday, Ukrainian officials said Russian jet-powered drones struck a home in northern Ukraine, killing a 29-year-old woman and her 9-year-old son.

The strike came a day after the United Nations said July was the deadliest month for Ukrainian civilians since the weeks following Moscow's all-out invasion of its neighbor more than four years ago.

At least 437 civilians were killed and 2,610 wounded last month, the UN monitoring mission in Kyiv said, as Russia escalated its bombing of Ukrainian towns and cities. In Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, a Russian glide bomb demolished six floors of a 10-story apartment block, killing one person and wounding 16 others, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Russia is launching around 220 glide bombs every day against settlements near the front line in eastern and southern Ukraine, Zelenskyy said, adding that in all, Russia attacked 12 Ukrainian regions overnight.