

DAILY PT POINTERS

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Is Syria's Assad regime in danger?

What was the role of Russia in the Syrian civil war back in 2016? How was the Bashar al-Assad regime able to recapture Aleppo then? Who are the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and what is their connection to the al-Qaeda? How were the militants able to make such extensive territorial gains?

EXPLAINER

Stanly Johny

The story so far:

Islamist militants in Syria's northwest launched a surprise attack last week against the forces of President Bashar al-Assad and made dramatic territorial gains. The Syrian civil war, which broke out in 2011 amidst Arab Spring-inspired anti-government protests, had entered into a frozen stage in late 2016 after the regime recaptured most of its territories. There was relative calm, but no real peace in the Arab republic. With the latest clashes, peace has been broken and hot



Dramatic offensive: Militants of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham drive along a street in al-Rashideen, Aleppo province, Syria on November 29. REUTERS

THE GIST

Islamist militants in Syria's northwest launched a surprise attack last week against the forces of President Bashar al-Assad and made dramatic territorial gains.

The HTS is led by Abu Mohammad al-Julani, a 42-year-old Syrian militant. Julani had moved to Iraq in his early 20s to fight the American occupation of the country (2003) and joined the al-Qaeda.

out such an attack against an enclave of 3 million people without Russia's action.

- Islamist militants from Idlib launched an offensive against Assad's forces.
- Rebels captured Aleppo within days, expanding their control.
- Rebels have now entered Hama, a regime stronghold.

Main Actors:

- Assad Regime: Supported by Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): Kurdish militia backed by the U.S.
- Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS): Leading the offensive from Idlib, backed by Turkey.

Geopolitical Context:

Russian Withdrawal: Russia's focus on Ukraine and withdrawal of troops weakened Assad's forces.

Iranian and Hezbollah Challenges: Losses in Syria due to Israeli strikes

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India and China hold negotiations over border coordination

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In preparation for the meeting of the Special Representatives on boundary resolution, India and China on Thursday held the 32nd meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China Border Affairs.

This is the latest in a series of bilateral engagements since the recent bonhomie in the bilateral relationship following disengagement in the last two friction points – Depsang and Demchok.

“The two sides positively affirmed the implementation of the most recent disengagement agreement which completed the resolution of the issues that emerged in 2020. They also prepared for the next meeting of the Special Representatives, which is to be held in accordance with

leaders in their meeting in Kazan on October 23,” the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

The Indian delegation was led by Gourangalal Das, Joint Secretary (East Asia), and the Chinese delegation was led by Hong Liang, Director-General of the Boundary and Oceanic Affairs Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The 31st round of WMCC meeting was held on August 29 in Beijing.

Both sides reviewed the situation in the border areas, and “reflected on the lessons learnt” from the events of 2020 in order to prevent their recurrence, the statement said. They agreed on the need for effective border management and maintenance of peace and tranquillity in accordance with relevant bilateral agreements and understandings reached between the two govern-

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The Hindu-Governance(GSII) –Page15

Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak Bill gets nod in Rajya Sabha

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Parliament on Thursday passed the Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak Bill, 2024, which is expected to provide some relief to aviation personnel in their licensing processes.

The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill on Thursday. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on July 31 and was passed by the Lower House on August 9.

change in the Bill is that the radio telephone operator restricted certificate and licence testing process, which was hitherto conducted by the Department of Telecom for aviation personnel, including aircraft maintenance engineers, flight dispatchers, and pilots, has been moved to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. This will ensure a single-window clearance process as aviation personnel can now secure all their certi-

icates from one authority. Personnel taking exams, including trainee pilots, have alleged that there was rampant corruption in the conduct of the RTR exam under the DoT, with candidates required to cough up several lakhs in bribes.

The Bill also adds power to regulate the design of aircraft, as well as the places where they are being designed, in addition to retaining provisions for their manufacture, repair, and maintenance.

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- The most significant change in the Bill is that the radio telephone operator restricted certificate and licence testing process, which was hitherto conducted by the Department of Telecom for aviation personnel, including aircraft maintenance engineers, flight dispatchers, and pilots, has been moved to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. This will ensure a single-window clearance process as aviation personnel can now secure all their certificates from one authority. Personnel taking exams, including trainee pilots, have alleged that there was rampant corruption in the conduct of the RTR exam under the DoT, with candidates required to cough up several lakhs in bribes.

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Bhutan and India discuss Gelephu, hydel power plans

The leaders agreed on the need for early conclusion of the Punatsangchhu-II hydro power project; both sides discussed cross-border connectivity projects, including a rail line and digital networks

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India and Bhutan on Thursday discussed bilateral projects in the fields of electricity and urban planning during the visit of the King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk and Queen Jetsun Pema. Mr. Wangchuk met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and both sides reiterated continued collaboration on multiple fronts including in the Gelephu Mindfulness City project and hydropower.

A joint statement issued after the meeting said Mr. Modi "reassured His Majesty of India's continued support for the Gelephu Mindfulness City Project, which will bring prosperity and well-being in Bhutan and also the border areas, and further strengthen economy and investment linkages between the two countries".

The two sides on Thursday also discussed the hydel power projects including the 1020-MW Punatsangchhu-II hydro power project and ex-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk during the meeting on Thursday. PTI

was "nearing completion".

"The leaders agreed on the need for early conclusion of the Punatsangchhu-II hydro power project. The two sides reiterated the importance of cooperation in the hydropower sector, and their commitment to advancing it, including through finalizing modalities urgently for new projects, including reservoir hydro projects," the joint statement said.

Both sides also discussed cross-border con-

necting a rail line as well as digital networks.

The visit of the Bhutan royals comes days after the visit of Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay who inaugurated the Global Cooperatives Alliance in New Delhi on November 25. India's commitment for the Gelephu project while hosting the Bhutanese King is significant as it comes against the backdrop of diplomatic setbacks that South Block has faced in the neighbour-

where India's ties with the interim government of Bangladesh has failed to stabilise since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August.

In Nepal too, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has prioritised Kathmandu's ties with Beijing and sealed a new Framework for Belt and Road Cooperation on Wednesday during his first foreign trip since taking power in July this year.

The Hindu had earlier reported that the Adani Group was in talks with Thimphu for investing in the project in Gelephu. In July, Mr. Wangchuk and Prime Minister Tobgay had travelled to Gujarat where they sought cooperation with the Adani Group on airport, infrastructure and renewable energy projects.

While India's neighbours, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have announced reviews of Adani projects in the past few weeks, and the U.S. Department of Justice indictment of the Adani Group has cast a shadow, the Bhutanese government has so far not commented on the

- King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk and Queen Jetsun Pema of Bhutan visited India.

Meetings: Met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Key Projects Discussed:

- Gelephu Mindfulness City Project: India reaffirmed support, aiming to boost prosperity and investment.

Hydropower Projects: Discussed the nearing completion of the 1020-MW Punatsangchhu-II project and the need to conclude the Punatsangchhu-I project.

Other Topics:

Cross-border connectivity projects, including a rail line and digital networks

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

PIB-Economy(GSIII)

Ministry of Finance



Government of India and ADB sign \$50 million loan for climate-adaptative water harvesting project in Meghalaya

The project will support construction of 532 small water-storage facilities across 12 districts in Meghalaya besides developing 3,000 hectares of command area to provide reliable irrigation areas for farmers

- India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$50 million loan for the Climate-Adaptative Community-Based Water-Harvesting Project in Meghalaya.
Project Alignment: Supports Meghalaya State Water Policy (MSWP) 2019, focusing on sustainable water resource management and climate adaptation.
Project Goals:
Develop a state-wide water-harvesting systems (WHS) master plan.
Construct 532 small water-storage facilities with climate-resilient designs.
Improve water security and irrigation for 3,000 hectares of land.
Establish 50 weather stations and pilot renewable energy micro-hydropower.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

PIB-IR(GSII)

India and Slovenia Announce Five-Year Collaboration Plan: Dr. Jitendra Singh

Slovenian Minister Dr. Igor Papič Calls on Dr. Jitendra Singh – Both Commit to Strengthening Science Ties

Posted On: 05 DEC 2024 5:37PM by PIB Delhi



- Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh met Slovenian Minister Dr. Igor Papič to finalize the PoC for 2024–2029.
- Objectives: Strengthen scientific and technological collaboration between India and Slovenia.
- Expand joint research in hydrogen technologies and sustainable innovation.
- Agreements:
 - Both nations to work closely on hydrogen technologies for global energy sustainability.
 - Plans for a new joint call for research projects focusing on mutually agreed areas.
- Background: Partnership rooted in a 1995 agreement.
- Growth through the Joint Working Group on Scientific and Technological Cooperation.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-Culture(GSI)

PM Modi To Inaugurate Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav,
Celebrating North East's Culture & Craft

ASHTALAKSHMI MAHOTSAV

6th to 8th December 2024

Key Highlights of the Event:

- **State Pavilion**
To showcase exquisite
crafts of North Eastern States
- **GI Pavilion**
GI Textiles & Crafts of
North East India
- **Muga Silk Pavilion**



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi today.
- The three-day festival will showcase the culture, vibrant textile industry, artisanal crafts, tourism opportunities and unique products of all the eight North Eastern states. The festival draws inspiration from the eight Northeastern states, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura-collectively known as the Ashtalakshmi.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-History(GSI)

Nation Observes Mahaparinirvan Diwas, Pays Homage To Dr BR Ambedkar On His 69th Death Anniversary



- Mahaparinirvan Diwas: Observed annually on December 6 to commemorate Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's death anniversary.
 - Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: Born on April 14, 1891, in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh.
 - Dedicated his life to uplifting marginalized communities and eradicating caste-based discrimination.
- Embraced Buddhism as a path to liberation and an antidote to caste oppression.
- Key Contributions:
- Social Reforms:
- Launched the newspaper Mooknayaka (Leader of the Silent).
- Established Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (Outcastes Welfare Association).
- Led historic movements such as the Mahad March (1927) and temple entry movement (1930).
- Political Actions:
- Pivotal role in the Poona Pact (1932).

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-Space(GSIII)

Copernicus Sentinel-1C Satellite Launched Aboard Vega-C Rocket



- The third Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite was launched last night aboard a Vega-C rocket from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana. The launch marked the return of the Italian-built Vega-C launcher, two years after a failure during its debut commercial mission.
- Sentinel-1C builds on the success of its predecessors, delivering high-resolution radar images to monitor Earth's changing environment. It supports various applications, advances scientific research, and adds new capabilities for tracking maritime traffic.
- With 12 Sentinel satellite families, Copernicus is the world's largest Earth observation system and boasts the largest repository of radar data, according to its developers.