

1820

Russian Antarctic Expedition led by Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen and Mikhail Lazarev discover the continent of Antarctica

1944

Siege of Leningrad lifted by the Soviets after 880 days and more than 2 million Russians killed

1945

Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz and Birkenau Concentration Camps in Poland



1973

US & North Vietnam's William Rogers & Nguyen Duy Trinh sign cease-fire, ending longest US war and military draft

All diplomatic ties



Saudi Arabia downgraded relations with Bangkok after a diplomatic row over a theft in 1989 of around \$20 million of jewels by a Thai janitor working in the palace of a Saudi prince, in what became known as the "Blue Diamond Affair". A year after the theft, three Saudi diplomats in Thailand were killed in three separate assassinations in a single night.

A large number of the gems, including the rare blue diamond, are yet to be recovered.

In 2014, a Thai criminal court dismissed a case against five men, including a senior police officer, charged with murdering Saudi businessman Mohammad al-Ruwaili, who disappeared one

month after witnessing one of the shootings of the Saudi diplomats.

Thailand has been eager to normalise ties with oil-rich Saudi Arabia after the spat that has cost billions of dollars in two-way trade and tourism revenues and the loss of jobs for tens of thousands of Thai migrant workers.

Israel, Lebanon to resume maritime border talks

Agencies

Israel's Energy Ministry and Lebanon President Michel Aoun had expressed their intention yesterday to resume negotiations for setting maritime border next week.

Israeli Energy Minister Karine Elharrar said they would meet with US envoy Amos Hochstein next week as part of efforts to settle the dispute, the ministry said.

Indirect talks between Israel and Lebanon have stalled several times.

Lebanon President Michel Aoun said that his country is ready to resume negotiations over the demarcation of a



Lebanon's President Michel Aoun

southern maritime border that is disputed with Israel.

Long time foes Lebanon and Israel started indirect negotiations through a US mediator in 2020 at a UN peacekeeping base in Lebanon's Naqoura, but the talks have stalled several times.

The maritime border dispute has held up exploration in the potentially gas-rich area.

Separately, Aoun said that his nation welcomes last week's Kuwaiti proposal of confidence-building measures to end a diplomatic rift with Gulf states.

Aoun added on Twitter that the answers to the initiative will be conveyed by Lebanon's foreign minister to the Arab ministerial meeting in Kuwait.

Russia says "destructive" sanctions wouldn't hurt Prez Putin personally

● Kremlin: personal sanctions on Putin would not harm him

● Russia keeps up pressure with land and sea exercises

● Ukraine says Moscow is trying to sow panic

● Four-way talks on east Ukraine start in Paris



Russian warships entered the Barents Sea yesterday to rehearse protecting a major shipping lane in the Arctic, its Northern Fleet said yesterday, as Moscow stages sweeping military exercises involving all of its fleets.



A Russian army service member fires a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launcher during drills at the Kuzminsky range in the southern Rostov region, Russia

large-scale offensive, but that did not mean it could not do so later.

Nearly eight years after Russia seized Crimea and backed separatist fighters in Donbass in eastern Ukraine, the former Soviet republic has become the flashpoint in potentially the most dangerous East-West confrontation since the Cold War.

Russia says the crisis is being driven by NATO and US actions, and is demanding security guarantees from the West, including a promise by NATO never to admit Ukraine. Moscow sees Ukraine as a buffer between Russia and NATO countries.

Western allies have threatened economic sanctions against Russia if it attacks Ukraine, and the United States has been talking to major energy-producing countries and companies around the world over a potential diversion of supplies to Europe if Russia invades Ukraine.

The EU depends on Russia for around a third of its gas supplies. Any interruptions to its Russian imports would exacerbate an existing energy crisis

vital to remaining relevant in the broader dialogue with Moscow while the United States and NATO hold separate crisis negotiations.

French officials said they hoped that some progress could be made that would help the wider efforts to reduce tensions.

A French presidential official said the aim was to set a date for talks on humanitarian measures and prisoner releases that would then lead to negotiations on the future of the Donbass region. However, he said the reality was that they would use the Paris talks to determine whether Russia was serious.

"Either President Putin will seek maximum tension with us, which means it will be very difficult to progress in the Normandy talks, or he assesses that in this great period of volatility, it's useful to use this format to reduce tensions."

Interfax news agency quoted the Russian defence ministry as saying it a paratrooper unit had been deployed to Belarus on Wednesday, a day after moving in artillery forces and marines ahead of joint exercises next month.

It said Russia was also moving Su-35 fighter jets to Belarus for the "Allied Resolve" exercises.

The buildup of Russian forces in Belarus, a close Russian ally and former Soviet republic north of Ukraine, creates a new front for a possible attack. read more

RIA news agency said more than 20 Russian vessels had embarked on exercises in the Black Sea, south of Ukraine.

Separately, Russian artillery forces in the southern Rostov region that borders Ukraine were set to practice firing on Wednesday as part of a combat readiness inspection of the Southern Military District, the Defence Ministry said.

2023

Russian authorities have said the country plans to begin year-round shipping via the Northern Sea Route in 2022 or 2023.

has previously said they would amount to severing diplomatic relations.

As officials began four-nation talks in Paris, Russia held new military drills on land and sea and moved more paratroops and fighter jets to Belarus, north of Ukraine, for what it describes as joint exercises there next month.

Ukraine said Russia, which has gathered tens of thousands of troops near its border but denied plans to invade, was trying to sow panic. Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Moscow had not yet massed sufficient forces for a

Individual sanctions against Putin would be "not painful (but) politically destructive", said Peskov, who



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TWEETS

01



I'm deeply grateful to @WHO #EB150 Member States for their confidence in me and for unanimously nominating me to serve a second term as WHO Director-General. I remain deeply committed to our shared vision for a healthier, safer, fairer world.

@DrTsedros

02



The UK and India are tied by bonds that span over decades, through generations and across some of the greatest challenges we have faced. I want to send my best wishes from the UK to the people of India, and to all British Indians, on India's Republic Day

@BorisJohnson

03



On Republic Day, we recall the great women and men who worked towards the making of our Constitution. We also reiterate our commitment to fulfil their dreams for our nation.

@narendramodi

04



The frightening human cost of waging war in cities is not inevitable; it is a choice. All parties must respect international humanitarian law. Alleged war crimes must be investigated & prosecuted to the maximum extent.

@antoniogetterres

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