

Israeli Military Chief on First Visit to India

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JERUSALEM: Israel's army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, has left on a trip to India, the first time the head of the Israeli military is visiting the country, the army said on Dec. 6.

Ashkenazi left for India late on Dec. 5 as part of a trip to Asia, it said in a statement.

"The visit to India is part of the process of strengthening the ties between Israel and India and the nations' militaries," it said, adding that the trip marked "the first official visit of an IDF (Israel Defense Forces) chief to India."

Ashkenazi is due to meet with his Indian counterpart, Gen. Deepak Kapoor, on his visit, as well as the Indian national security advisor and the heads of the country's air force and navy.

Ashkenazi will also visit other countries in the region during his trip, an army spokesman said, but declined to say which ones.

Israel replaced France in 2007 as India's second-largest arms supplier after Russia and could grab the number one slot through a vast array of defense agreements already signed with New Delhi.

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