

IN-SPACE releases plans for 30 launches over next 14 months

NEW DELHI, Feb 8 (PTI)

INDIA'S space regulator IN-SPACE on Thursday said about 30 space launches, including seven by private startups Skyroot and Agnikul, are scheduled in the fourth quarter of 2023-24 and the next fiscal.

The Integrated Launch Manifesto for space launches announced by the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACE) include seven launches related to the Gaganyaan mission, two



Preparations underway for the launch of ISRO's GSLV-F14/INSAT-3DS mission, at the Satish Dhawan Space Station, in Sriharikota. (PTI)

launches each of ISRO's newest rocket – the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) and the warhorse

PSLV developed by an industry consortium.

Chennai-based Agnikul Cosmos is scheduled to launch its first 3-D printed rocket Agnibaan-SOrTeD for the fourth quarter of the current fiscal year. The maiden flight of the Agnibaan rocket will be a sub-orbital mission.

The other launches this fiscal year include that of GSLV-F14 to put the INSAT-3DS satellite in orbit to augment weather forecasting, disaster management, and related meteorological services.

World Defence Show in Riyadh: India's women power in Armed Forces on full display

NEW DELHI, Feb 8 (PTI)

THREE women military officials -- Squadron Leader Bhawana Kanth, Colonel Ponung Doming and Lieutenant Commander Annu Prakash -- are among the personnel representing India at the World Defence Show in Riyadh.

The five-day mega event commenced on February 4 and

it showcased the latest advancements in defence technology serving as a vital platform for international collaboration among the participating companies.

"The participation of these three exceptional women officers at the World Defence Show served as a testament to the growing role of Indian women in the defence landscape," the Defence Ministry said.

On Wednesday, Squadron Leader Kanth, a fighter pilot, took centre stage as a panellist at a seminar titled 'International Women in Defence - Investing in an Inclusive Future' that was hosted by Saudi Ambassador to the US Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud. The Squadron Leader shared her inspiring journey of breaking barriers and soaring through the skies.

Jaishankar bats for deeper engagement among IOR nations

PERTH, Feb 9 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday called for shoring up engagement among countries of Indian Ocean region to confront challenges like safeguarding sovereignty, dealing with cases of disregard to maritime laws and flouting of long-standing pacts, in remarks seen as an oblique reference to China's military assertiveness including along the Line of Actual Control.

In an address at the seventh Indian Ocean Conference in Perth, he also flagged concerns over unsustainable debt, opaque lending practices, unviable projects and "injudicious" choices, in thinly-veiled comments that came amid concerns over many



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Australian Foreign Minister Senator Penny Wong and others at the opening of the 7th Indian Ocean Conference in Perth, Australia on Friday. (ANI)

countries falling into the Chinese 'debt trap'. "As we gaze at the

Indian Ocean, the challenges besetting the world are on full dis-

play there. At one extremity, we see conflict, threats to maritime traffic, piracy, terrorism," Jaishankar said. "At the other, there are challenges to international law, concerns about freedom of navigation and overflights, and of safeguarding of sovereignty and of independence. Any disregard for arduously negotiated regimes like UNCLOS 1982 is naturally disturbing," he said.

JAISHANKAR HOLD TALKS WITH WONG: EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday met his Australian counterpart Penny Wong and discussed the bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership, the Indo-Pacific region, situation in West Asia and other regional and global topics.

India to host 9-day naval exercise from 19th

NEW DELHI, Feb 9 (PTI)

INDIA will host a nine-day mega naval exercise in Visakhapatnam beginning February 19 that is expected to see participation of over 50 navies against the backdrop of fractious geopolitical environment including increasing security concerns in the Red Sea.

Navies from the US, Japan, Australia, France, Bangladesh, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia are set to be among the participating nations in the 'Milan' exercise to be conducted off Visakhapatnam from February 19 to 27. Milan is a biennial multinational naval exercise

which started in 1995 with the participation of Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand in consonance with India's 'Look East' policy. The exercise flourished under the aegis of Andaman and Nicobar Command till its 10th edition.

With the growing stature of the exercise and the requirement of a larger staging and hosting base, Visakhapatnam, was chosen for the exercise.

The city is ideal to host the event owing to various aspects, namely major commercial hub, large port, steep coastal gradient closer to its shores enabling ships to operate closer to the shore and long coastline offering excellent viewing experience for the public.

Mizoram, Assam agree to resolve border dispute

AIZAWL, Feb 9 (PTI)

MIZORAM and Assam on Friday agreed to make joint efforts to resolve the long-pending inter-state border dispute, an official statement said here.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswas Sarma on Friday morning invited his Mizoram counterpart Lalduhoma, who is currently in Guwahati, over a meal and both leaders discussed the border issue. During the meeting, Lalduhoma and Sarma agreed to make collective efforts to resolve the border dispute between the two northeastern States, it said.

Both leaders also agreed to maintain peace along the borders as long as the two neighbouring states hold border talks, it said.

Sarma told Lalduhoma that he will send the minister in charge of border to Mizoram when the ongoing budget session of the Assam Assembly is over. Three Mizoram districts - Aizawl, Kolasib and Mamit - share a 164.6 km long border with Assam's Cachar, Karimganj and Hailankandi districts.

The border dispute between the two neighbouring states is a long-standing issue, which mainly stemmed from two colonial demarcations.

Mizoram claims that 509 square miles area of the inner line reserved forest, notified in 1875 under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) 1873, falls within its territory. Assam, on the other hand, regarded the border shown in a map prepared by the Survey of India in 1933 as its constitutional boundary.

Vast areas within the inner line reserved forest now fall under Assam. Similarly, a certain extent of the area, as per the 1933 demarcation, is now on the Mizoram side. There is no ground demarcation of boundaries between the two States.

BHARAT RATNA

Charan Singh, Narasimha Rao, M S Swaminathan



Charan Singh,
Ex-Prime Minister



P V Narasimha Rao,
Ex-Prime Minister



M S Swaminathan
Agriculture scientist

NEW DELHI, Feb 9 (PTI)

FORMER Prime Ministers P V Narasimha Rao, who is widely recognised for ushering in economic reforms in the 1990s, and Chaudhary Charan Singh, a champion of farmers' cause, and Green Revolution pioneer Dr M S Swaminathan will be conferred with the Bharat Ratna, it was announced on Friday.

The announcement was made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, days after the Centre named former Bihar Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur, a champion of backward empowerment, and L K Advani, a founding BJP member credited with charting the course of its

rise through the 1990s, for Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour.

At five, one more than the four announced in 1999, this is the maximum number of Bharat Ratnas announced for a year. With this, the number of recipients of the prestigious award, instituted in 1954, has risen to 53. Four of the five awards this year are posthumous. Advani, 96, is the only one alive.

Prime Minister Modi, who took to microblogging platform X to make the announcement, lauded the contributions made by the three awardees.

Later, the Rashtrapati Bhawan in a press communique said the President
(Contd on page 3)

Working on roadmap for rapid economic devt in 3rd term: PM

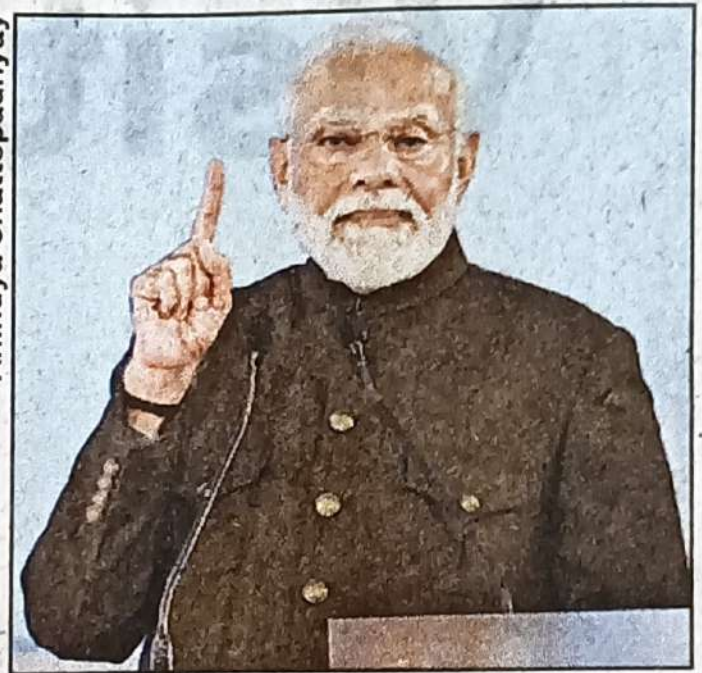
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Describing it as India's moment, PM Modi Friday said he was working on a roadmap for rapid economic development during his "third term" in office.

"You should be prepared for many more big decisions. We have been working on a roadmap for last one-and-a-half years to remove poverty, to speed up development. I have taken suggestions from over 15 lakh people. I have not issued a press note for that. It will take its final shape in 20-30 days. New India will work at super speed. This is Modi's guarantee," he said at ET Now Global Business Summit.

PM said people were confident of India's ability to

Anindya Chattopadhyay



'New India will work at super speed,' PM Modi said on Friday

emerge as world's third largest economy during his govt's "third term".

Referring to Feb 1's interim Budget presented by FM Nirmala Sitharaman, Modi said his govt focused on stability, consistency and continuity in all policies.

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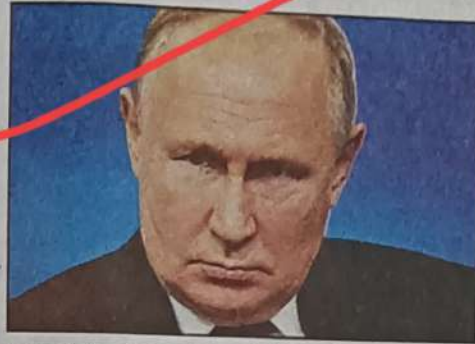
Russia has no interest expanding war in Ukraine to Poland & Latvia: Putin

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in an interview that aired on Thursday that Russia will fight for its interests "to the end" but has no interest in expanding its war in Ukraine to other countries such as Poland and Latvia.

In his first interview with an American journalist since before Russia's invasion of Ukraine nearly two years ago, Putin said Western leaders had come to realise it was impossible to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia and were wondering what to do next. "We are ready for this dialogue," he said.

Putin also said he believed it was possible to reach an agreement to free US journalist Evan Gershkovich of Wall Street Journal, who has been detained in Russia for nearly a year and is awaiting trial on spying charges. Putin made the comments in a more than two-hour interview with conservative talk-show host Tucker Carlson that was conducted in Moscow on Tuesday.

Asked if he could imagine a scenario in which he would send Russian troops to Poland,



President Putin said he believed it was possible to reach a deal to free journalist Evan Gershkovich of Wall Street Journal, who is detained in Russia and awaiting trial on spying charges

a Nato member, Putin replied: "Only in one case, if Poland attacks Russia. Why? Because we have no interest in Poland, Latvia or anywhere else. Why would we do that? We simply don't have any interest."

Putin devoted a substantial part of the interview to complaining that Ukraine had been on the verge of agreeing to a deal to end hostilities at talks in Istanbul in April 2022, but backed away, he said, once Russian troops withdrew from near Kyiv. "Now let them think how to reverse the situation," he said. "We're not against it. It would be funny if it were not so

sad. This endless mobilization in Ukraine, the hysteria, domestic problems, sooner or later it will result in an agreement." Putin said the US had pressing domestic issues to worry about. "Wouldn't it be better to negotiate with Russia? Make an agreement. Already understanding the situation that is developing today, realising Russia will fight for its interests to the end."

Putin was last formally interviewed by a US media outlet in Oct 2021, when CNBC's Hadley Gamble spoke to him.

Putin said Russian and American special services were discussing the Gershkovich case and had made some progress. Putin suggested that in return, Moscow wanted Germany to free Vadim Krasikov, who was convicted of the 2019 murder of a Chechen dissident in Berlin, although he did not mention Krasikov by name.

Kremlin said Putin agreed to the Carlson interview because the host's approach differed from the "one-sided" reporting of the Ukraine conflict by many Western outlets. REUTERS

An army-backed Sharif govt in Pak? What it means for India

Some Think It Could Lead To Thaw In Ties Given Modi-Nawaz Past Camaraderie, While Others Say Delhi Has Zero Incentive To Reach Out To A Country In Disarray

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Jailed Imran Khan's party PTI-backed independent candidates seemed to have delivered a body blow to the formidable Pakistan army and its newly minted protege Nawaz Sharif in the National Assembly elections, as they maintained a steady lead over Sharif's PML-N till late in the evening. Nevertheless, Sharif declared victory, while acknowledging he didn't have a majority, raising expectations among his supporters of his taking over as PM for the fourth time and concerns among others that the army will indeed browbeat many of the independents to back him.

To some, the return of Sharif, or his brother Shehbaz, as the leader of any coalition govt cobbled together by the army, holds the promise of a thaw in ties with India, given his past camaraderie with PM Narendra Modi and his stated desire to improve ties with India. That the rapport they struck when both were in office remained strong was obvious again in 2020 when Modi wrote to 'Mian Sahib' to condole his mother's demise, recalling his interaction with her when he visited Sharif's home in Raiwind in 2015. The fact that Modi didn't allow the bitterness that followed, emanating from the Pathankot terror attack barely a week after his visit, is a sign the Indian PM believes Sharif has his heart in the right place. Unlike Imran Khan, whose intemperate outbursts against Modi vitiated the atmosphere, Modi and Sharif have remained civil to each other. The proponents of this peace theory will argue that unlike in 1999, when then PM A B Vajpayee famously did his Lahore bus yatra, and in 2015 when Modi dropped by at Sharif's residence, Sharif will have the backing of the Pakistan military on this occasion.

To an equal number, if not more, though, there's zero incentive for India to plan a peace outreach to a country battling economic and political disarray, and amid the rapidly increasing



People cheer Nawaz Sharif at his PML-N party office in Lahore on Friday

Imran party slaps 'charade' verdict on Pak elections

Omer Farooq Khan | TNN

Islamabad: Mired in controversy and intrigue, Pakistan's national and provincial polls sunk further in the credibility stakes on Friday amid allegations of results being tampered with and the powerful military establishment controlling everything through the country's electoral watchdog. The initial delay in the announcement of results and some TV stations jumping the gun based on unofficial reports added to the chaos surrounding what is being panned as a poll charade.

Jailed Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf said independent candidates backed by it were leading in about 150 seats, which was instantly dismissed by election authorities as conjecture triggered by premature media reportage of "unofficial and incomplete" results. Poll officials blamed suspension of telecom data services since Thursday for the delay in announcement of results. Many candidates accused Election Commission of subterfuge, sa-

ying the delay indicated results were being manipulated.

PTI's Islamabad candidate Shoaib Shaheen said trends showed he was leading by 50,000-odd votes before the poll outcome was altered to favour his rival from PML-N. Observers said the question mark hanging over the poll exercise would remain. "We stayed up till late, tracking election results that had Imran-backed independents clearly ahead.... This morning, we found a set of very different results," said Tahir Ali, an observer, adding "things changed in a few hours".

Even a marginal victory for PTI-backed candidates would be remarkable given that the odds were stacked against Imran and his party. The administration employed every weapon in its arsenal, from a crackdown on PTI to stripping it of its electoral symbol - the cricket bat - and shutting down mobile phone and data services on poll day. The internet blackout continued till 3am Friday, with many accusing the authorities of changing the polling results in the dead of night.



power differential between the two countries. In the current situation, it perhaps makes more sense for India to enter a quiet and discreet engagement with

the army itself. That's assuming of course the Indian govt in present form will return in May and will realise at some stage its policy of zero engagement Pa-

kistan may have run its course.

Modi's three meetings with Sharif in 2015 - in Ufa, Paris and Raiwind - led to the resumption of the composite dialogue under the new name of comprehensive bilateral dialogue but only to be scuttled weeks later by the Pathankot air base attack. The Indian govt will remember it had entered that dialogue process only after the assurance that the peace initiative had the full backing of then army chief Raheel Sharif. The Sharif-army schism had deepened earlier that year after Sharif failed to mention the J&K issue in the Ufa joint statement but that issue was sorted when Pakistan's "core issue" reappeared in a joint statement issued after the NSAs met in Bangkok, days before the comprehensive bilateral dialogue was launched in Islamabad during then foreign minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to Pakistan. These events led to Modi's dramatic visit to Sharif's ancestral home on the latter's birthday.

Sharif will now need to account for a more evolved Indian position on terrorism that's even less tolerant of any distinction between state and non-state actors. Secondly, if he really thinks his return could mark a new beginning, he must first stop Pakistan from acting more Catholic than the Pope by not insisting on the demand for India to undo its decision on Article 370 as a precondition for engagement. That issue is now settled, and India has shown it will not brook any effort by Pakistan to have a say in how it runs internal affairs of J&K. Thirdly, he will need to acknowledge Pakistan did itself no good by recalling its high commissioner and calling off trade with India. If he can address both, India will definitely be tempted to respond positively. Fourthly, and perhaps more importantly, he must begin by making some positive noises about the need to check cross-border terrorism, which has clearly outlived its utility for Pakistan, and follow it with some tangible action.