

# India, Lanka commission Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre jointly

COLOMBO, June 20 (PTI)

**EXTERNAL** Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday held talks with Sri Lanka's top leadership, including President Ranil Wickremesinghe, and jointly commissioned with him the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre built with a USD 6 million grant from India, as New Delhi stepped up bilateral cooperation with its time-tested neighbour.

The Minister also called on Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and reiterated India's strong support through development and connectivity initiatives.

Jaishankar, who met Wickremesinghe at the President's House, said that he



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar being welcomed by State Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka Tharaka Balasuriya upon his arrival in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Thursday. (PTI)

conveyed the warm greetings of Prime Minister Modi and dis-

cussed the way forward for the bilateral cooperation, espe-

cially in power, energy, connectivity, port infrastructure, aviation, digital, health, food security, education and tourism sectors.

"Honoured to call on Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe. Conveyed the warm greetings of PM @narendramodi. Appreciated the progress made on various bilateral projects and initiatives," Jaishankar said in a post on X. "Under President @RW\_UNP's guidance, discussed the way forward for the India-Sri Lanka cooperation, especially in power, energy, connectivity, port infrastructure, aviation, digital, health, food security, education and tourism sectors. Committed

to working for the steady development of our traditionally close and friendly ties," said the minister who arrived here early Thursday, his first visit here in his second consecutive term in office.

President Wickremesinghe and Jaishankar jointly unveiled the virtual plaque to mark the formal commissioning of the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Sri Lanka under a USD 6 million grant from India. This includes a centre at Navy Headquarters in Colombo, a sub-centre in Hambantota and unmanned installations at Galle, Arugambay, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Kallarawa, Point Pedro and Mollikulam.

# Monsoon heads north, covers parts of Odisha, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh

■ IMD data showed the country has received 17 per cent deficient rainfall than normal this monsoon season -- 77 mm as against the normal of 92.8 mm between June 1 and 20

NEW DELHI, June 20 (PTI)

SOUTHWEST Monsoon started northwards on Thursday after a 10-day lull, covering parts of Odisha, Chhattisgarh and large tracts of Vidarbha, bringing relief to the parched regions that were reeling under hot weather conditions.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) data showed the country has received 17 per cent deficient rainfall than normal this monsoon season -- 77 mm as against the normal of 92.8 mm between June 1 and 20. "Southwest Monsoon has further advanced into some more parts of Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Northwest Bay of Bengal, Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and some parts of Bihar," the weather office said.

The IMD said conditions were favourable for further advance of Southwest Monsoon into some more parts of Gujarat,



Girls enjoy monsoon rains, in Kozhikode, on Thursday.

(PTI)

Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Gangetic and sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and east Uttar Pradesh during the next three to four days.

After reaching the Indian mainland two days earlier than usual and swiftly covering many other states, the rain-bearing system made no significant progress between June 10 and 19, extending the wait for north India, which is reeling from a sweltering heat wave.

Since June 1, northwest India has recorded 14.2 mm of rainfall (63 per cent less than normal), central India 58 mm (33 per cent less than normal), the south

peninsula 117.6 mm (13 per cent excess than normal), and east and northeast India 188.5 mm (four per cent less than normal).

In an update to its forecast earlier this week, the IMD had said monsoon rains in the month of June would be below normal. The southwest monsoon advanced into parts of the Nicobar Islands on May 19.

It subsequently covered most parts of the south and some parts of the central Bay of Bengal by May 26 along with Cyclone Remal.

It simultaneously reached Kerala and northeastern states on May 30, two and six days earlier than normal, respectively.

# Lt Gen N S Raja Subramani to be next Vice Chief of Army

NEW DELHI, June 20 (PTI)

LT GENERAL N S RAJA Subramani is set to be the next Vice Chief of Army Staff with the Government clearing his appointment to the post, official sources said on Thursday.

The officer, who is presently helming the Army's Central Command, will succeed Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi.

Lt Gen Dwivedi, currently serving as the Vice Chief, will be the next Chief of the Army Staff when incumbent Gen Manoj Pande retires on June 30.

Lt Gen Subramani has been appointed as the next Vice Chief, military sources said. In appointing Lt Gen Subramani as the Vice Chief of the Army, the Government followed the seniority principle.

Lt Gen Subramani was commissioned into the Garhwal Rifles in 1985. He has a distinguished and illustrious military career spanning more than 37 years.

An alumnus of National Defence Academy and Indian

Military Academy, the officer also attended the Joint Services Command Staff College, Bracknell (the UK) and National Defence College, New Delhi. He holds a Master of Arts Degree from King's College, London and an MPhil in

Defence Studies from Madras University. Lt Gen Subramani has the distinction of commanding a battalion during 'Operation Rhino' in Assam, an infantry brigade along the International Boundary with



Pakistan and a 'Black Cat' division in Northeast India.

He also commanded Uttar Bharat Area in 2020 and the premier Kharga Corps at Ambala. Lt Gen Subramani also held a number of key positions including that of a brigade major of a mountain brigade, assistant military secretary, Colonel General Staff at headquarters Eastern Command, Deputy DG of Military Intelligence in the Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence and Brigadier General Staff in Eastern Command.

# India becomes third-largest domestic airline market

NEW DELHI, June 20 (IANS)

DRIVEN by robust growth in the aviation sector in the last decade, India is now the third-largest domestic airline market in the world, up from 5th position 10 years ago.

Ten years ago, India was the smallest market with around 8 million seats, followed by Indonesia at 4th and Brazil at 3rd place, and the US and China occupying the top two positions. Today, the US and China remain the largest domestic aviation markets.

“However, India is surpassing the Brazilian and

Indonesian domestic markets to become the third-largest domestic market with airline capacity of 15.6 million seats in April 2024,” according to OAG data.

India’s capacity growth rate of seats over a 10-year average is the highest, growing at 6.9 per cent annually.

“India is the fastest growing market across all five domestic markets we considered. China was close behind with annual growth of 6.3 per cent between 2014 and 2024, and there is a much smaller growth rate in the US and Indonesia,” according to the data.

# DGCA eases norms for seaplane operations

MUMBAI, June 20 (PTI)

**AVIATION** regulator DGCA on Thursday said it has eased norms related to seaplane operations under the government's flagship regional air connectivity scheme UDAAN.

The revised norms will streamline infrastructure procedures, pilot training requirements, and regulatory compliances, paving the way for seaplane services to reach remote areas, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in a statement.

The revised regulations will incorporate easier training



requirements and simplified approval processes for seaplane operations.

"Pursuant to a DGCA Working Group recommending rationalisation and revision of

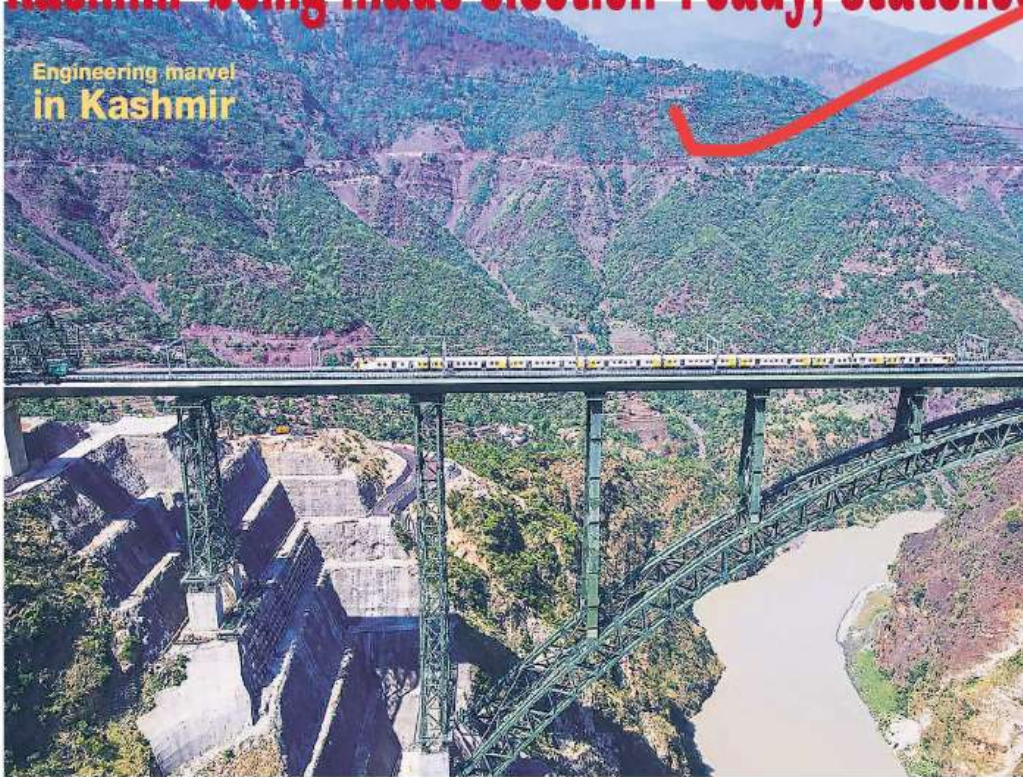
the said regulatory framework, revised regulations have been promulgated," it said. Under the

updated norms, pilots with a Commercial Pilot License (CPL) can now qualify as seaplane-rated pilots by training at any ICAO-recognised training organisation globally. Additionally, new training opportunities for support roles are set to enhance employment potential at seaplane hubs nationwide.

Initially established in 2008, the regulatory framework for seaplane operations was long due for a review, the regulator said, adding that the collaborative efforts with all stakeholders have ensured that the new regulations address their concerns.

# Kashmir being made election-ready; statehood on the way: PM

Engineering marvel  
in Kashmir



Indian Railways conducts trial run on the world's highest railway bridge over Chenab in Reasi on Thursday.

(PTI)

SRINAGAR, June 20 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said preparations for the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir have begun and the Union Territory will get back its statehood too.

Addressing an event after laying foundation stone and inaugurating 84 developmental projects worth Rs 1,500 crore in Srinagar, Modi also said the Central Government has taken the recent terror attacks in the Union territory very seriously and the enemies of Jammu and Kashmir will be given a befitting reply.

He also praised the youths of Jammu and Kashmir for the high turnout in the recently-concluded Lok Sabha polls and said they have ensured victory of democracy.

Modi said the wall of the Article 370, which was scrapped in August 2019, collapsed and fruits of Indian Constitution ensured in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Today the Indian Constitution has truly been imple-

## PM to participate in the 10th International Yoga Day today

mented in Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

The Prime Minister said today the forces inimical to peace and development are making last ditch efforts to stop the progress of Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Centre has taken the recent terror attacks very seriously. The Home Minister held a meeting and reviewed the entire mechanism. I want to assure that we will leave no stone unturned to punish the enemies of Jammu and Kashmir," he said. Modi assured the people that permanent peace will be established in Jammu and Kashmir.

Modi on Thursday embarked on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir. He will participate in the International Yoga Day on Friday. This is Prime Minister Modi's first visit to J&K after taking charge at the Centre for the third term. "On 21st June, around 6.30 am, the Prime Minister will participate in the 10th International Day of Yoga event at SKICC in Srinagar. The Prime Minister will address the gathering on the occasion and take part in the CYP Yoga session thereafter," an official handout from the Press Information Bureau said. Stringent multi-layer security arrangements have been put in place for the Prime Minister's two-day visit to Kashmir.

# Kejriwal gets bail in money laundering case



NEW DELHI, June 20 (PTI)

**IN** A huge relief to embattled Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, a court here on Thursday granted him bail in a money laundering case stemming from the alleged excise scam.

Special Judge Niyay Bindu also declined the Enforcement Directorate's prayer to keep in abeyance the bail order for 48 hours to allow the Central agency to avail legal remedies like moving a superior court in appeal.

The judge ordered Kejriwal's release on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh but imposed certain conditions before granting him the relief, including that he will not try to hamper the investigation or influence the witnesses.

The judge also directed Kejriwal to appear before the court whenever required and to cooperate with the investigation.

The judge had reserved the order earlier during the day after hearing the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which sought to link Kejriwal to the alleged proceeds of crime and co-accused, and the defence that claimed the prosecution has no evidence to nail the AAP leader.

Kejriwal's lawyers are likely to submit the bail bond before the court tomorrow, after which he would be released from Tihar jail. On the other hand, the ED is also likely to challenge the bail order before a higher court in the coming days.

*(Contd on page 5)*

# Indians' funds in Swiss banks plunge 70 pc to hit 4-year low of Rs 9,771 cr

NEW DELHI/ZURICH, June 20 (PTI)

**FUNDS** parked by Indian individuals and firms in Swiss banks, including through local branches and other financial institutions, fell sharply by 70 per cent in 2023 to a four-year low of 1.04 billion Swiss Francs (Rs 9,771 crore), annual data from Switzerland's central bank showed on Thursday.

The decline in aggregate funds of Indian clients with Swiss banks for the second consecutive year, after hitting a 14-year-high of CHF 3.83 billion in 2021, was largely driven by a sharp plunge in funds held through bonds, securities and various other financial instruments. Besides, the amount in



customer deposit accounts and funds held through other bank branches in India also declined significantly, the data showed.

These are official figures reported by banks to the Swiss National Bank (SNB) and do not indicate the quantum of the much-debated alleged black money held by Indians in Switzerland. These figures also do not include the money that Indians, NRIs or others

might have in Swiss banks in the names of third-country entities.

The total amount of CHF 1,039.8 million, described by the SNB as 'total liabilities' of Swiss banks or 'amounts due to' their Indian clients at the end of 2023, included CHF 310 million in customer deposits (down from CHF 394 million at 2022-end), CHF 427 million held via other banks (down from CHF 1,110 million), CHF 10 million (down from CHF 24 million) through fiduciaries or trusts, and CHF 302 million as 'other amounts due to customers in form of bonds, securities and various other financial instruments (down from CHF 1,896 million).

The total amount stood at a record high of nearly 6.5 billion

Swiss francs in 2006, after which it has been mostly on a downward path, except for a few years including in 2011, 2013, 2017, 2020 and 2021, as per SNB data.

While all four components had declined during 2019, the year 2020 saw a significant plunge in customer deposits, while there was a surge across all categories in 2021. During 2022, only the fiduciaries segment saw an increase.

According to the SNB, its data for 'total liabilities' of Swiss banks towards Indian clients takes into account all types of funds of Indian customers at Swiss banks, including deposits from individuals, banks and enterprises. This includes data for branches of Swiss banks in India, as also non-deposit liabilities.