

SUSPENDED

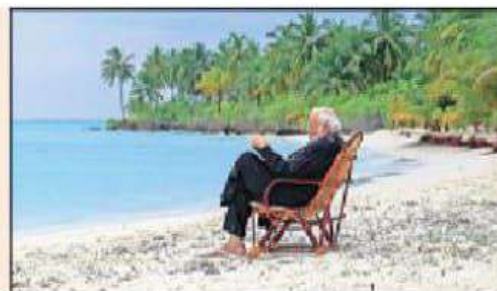
Maldives acts against 3 Ministers for derogatory remarks against Modi

■ Indian envoy also took up the matter with the Maldivian Govt

NEW DELHI, Jan 7 (PTI)

THE Maldivian Government on Sunday reportedly suspended three Deputy Ministers for derogatory social media posts against Prime Minister Narendra Modi following a backlash with New Delhi strongly raising the matter with Male and the island nation's top Opposition leaders

A row erupted on social media last week when three Maldives Deputy Ministers Malsha Shareef, Mariyam Shiuna and Abdulla Mahzoom Majid made derogatory remarks against PM Modi after he posted a video of him on a pristine beach in Lakshadweep.



slammed the ruling establishment over the row.

The three Deputy Ministers criticised Modi for his post on 'X' following his visit to Lakshadweep, inferring that it

was an attempt to project the Union Territory as an alternative tourist destination to the Maldives.

Several Maldivian media outlets, quoting officials,

reported that Deputy Ministers in the youth ministry, Malsha Shareef, Mariyam Shiuna and Abdulla Mahzoom Majid, have been suspended over their
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Saudi oil price cut to offer India room for better deals

Move Seen As A Bid To Protect Share From Rival Producers

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New Delhi: Saudi Aramco on Sunday cut OSP (official selling price) of flagship Arab Light crude for Asia to their lowest in 27 months—a move that can work well for India if it prompts oil to slide further to boost prospects of cheaper fuel for consumers and keep the energy import bill from bloating.

Aramco slashed the OSP by \$2 per barrel for February shipments, marking the second consecutive reduction after \$1.5 per barrel discount announced in December for January loading. The world's largest oil exporter also pruned prices for North America, North West Europe and the Mediterranean.

The Saudi move is seen as a bid to protect market

LOSING GROUND TO RUSSIA

➤ Saudi Aramco slashed OSP (official selling price) of flagship Arab Light crude for Asia to lowest in 27 months

➤ Asia is considered growth engine for global oil demand because of China and India

➤ They are the world's second and third-largest oil consumers, respectively

➤ Saudi Arabia sees a serious competition from US, with shale oil coming to Asia from around 2017

➤ India and China have been lapping up Russian oil shunned by western buyers since the Ukraine war

➤ Russia's gain has come at Saudi Arabia's expense



share amid onslaught from rival producers. Asia is important as it is considered the growth engine for global oil demand because of China and India — the world's second and third-largest oil consumers, respectively.

Saudi Arabia sees a serious competition from the US fracking boom as shale oil fo-

und its way into Asia around 2017. The tectonic shift in the global energy flow sparked by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and emergence of new suppliers in South America and Africa poses a bigger challenge.

India and China have been lapping up the Russian barrels shunned by western

buyers since the Ukraine war as sanctions and banking curbs on Moscow made payments difficult. Before the war, Russia accounted for less than 1% of India's oil imports. Today, it has replaced Saudi Arabia as the second-biggest supplier on the back of hefty discounts. China and India account for 80% of Russian oil exports.

Russia's gain has come at Saudi Arabia's expense as the discounts by Russian sellers, an opaque shipping system and elevated prices kept the oil flowing in spite of the G7 price cap of \$60 per barrel.

But as an extended production cut equivalent to more than 2% of daily global supplies fail to excite oil prices, Riyadh may have found a window to muscle its way back.

Three criminal laws framed with spirit of citizen first, dignity first, justice first: PM

JAIPUR, Jan 7 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that the three new criminal justice laws were enacted with the spirit of "citizen first, dignity first and justice first" and that the police now need to work with data instead of 'danda'.

Addressing the 58th conference of Director Generals of Police (DGPs) and Inspector Generals of Police (IGPs) here, Modi exhorted the police to focus on the safety of women to ensure they can work fearlessly "kabhi bhi aur kahin bhi (anytime, anywhere)."

He emphasised that the new criminal laws were framed with the spirit of "citizen first, dignity first and justice first" and instead of working with 'dan-

da', police now need to work with "data".

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam have been enacted recently to replace the Indian Penal Code-1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure-1898 and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, respectively.

The Prime Minister said these new laws were a paradigm shift in India's criminal justice system.

He said a special focus was laid on sensitising women and girls about their rights and protection provided to them under the new laws.

Modi said the Indian police should transform itself into a modern and world-class force

to realise the vision of a developed India by 2047 -- the centenary of India's independence.

PM HAILS NAVY'S HEROIC OPERATION IN RESCUING SAILORS OF MERCHANT SHIP, SUCCESS OF ADITYA L1: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed as "heroic" the successful conduct of an operation by the Indian Navy to free a merchant ship from the clutches of pirates in the North Arabian Sea.

Addressing the 58th conference of the DGPs and the IGPs here, Modi also referred to the success of India's first solar mission craft Aditya L1 and said it is a testament to the power of India and the prowess of Indian scientists.

"Two days ago, the Indian Navy completed a very suc-

cessful heroic operation. When it got the message that a merchant ship was in distress, the Indian Navy and the marine commandos got active," he said.

The Prime Minister said there were 21 sailors in the ship of which 15 were Indians. The ship was about 2,000 km away from the Indian coast.

He said the Navy rescued all the sailors from danger.

"The Indian sailors (after they were rescued) were hailing the bravery of the commandos and raising the slogan of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'," he said.

On January 5, the Indian Navy's elite marine commandos rescued all 21 crew members including 15 Indians from a bulk carrier after boarding it from a warship in a swift oper-

ation in the North Arabian Sea that followed after around five to six armed pirates attempted to hijack the Liberian-flagged vessel.

On the Aditya L1 mission, Modi said the spacecraft reached its destination, the L1 point, about 1.5 million kilometres from Earth from where it will study the Sun's wonders, uninterrupted by eclipses and occultations.

"This is the spot from where Aditya L1 will be in clear view of the Sun. This is going to greatly help in scientific research like our moon mission," he said.

The Prime Minister said the success of the Aditya L1 is a testament to India's power and prowess of Indian scientists. It is another great example," he said.

instead of working with a modern and world-class force navy completed a very suc- from a warship's swift oper- ne said.

Blinken meets Jordan's King, Foreign Minister

AMMAN, Jan 7 (AP)

US SECRETARY of State Antony Blinken met on Sunday with Jordan's King and Foreign Minister as he pressed ahead with an urgent Middle-East diplomatic mission to prevent Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza from spreading.

On his fourth visit to the region in three months, Blinken stressed the need for Israel to adjust its military operations to reduce civilian casualties and significantly boost the amount of humanitarian aid reaching Gaza while highlighting the importance of preparing detailed plans for the post-conflict future of the territory, which has been decimated by intensive Israeli



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) meets Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi in Amman, Jordan. (AP)

airstrikes and ground offensives.

After a day of talks with

Turkish and Greek leaders in Istanbul and Crete, Blinken met on Sunday with Jordan's King

Abdullah II and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi seeking buy-in for US efforts to tamp down resurgent fears that the three-month-old war could engulf the region, ramp up aid deliveries to Gaza and prepare for the eventual end of hostilities.

Jordan and other Arab states have been highly critical of Israel's actions and have eschewed public support for long-term planning, arguing that the fighting must end before such discussions can begin.

They have been demanding an immediate cease-fire since mid-October as civilian casualties began to skyrocket. Israel has refused and the US has instead called for specified

temporary "humanitarian pauses" to allow aid to get in and people to get to safety.

Blinken also toured the World Food Programme's Regional Coordination warehouse in the Jordanian capital where trucks are being packed with aid to be delivered to Gaza through both Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings.

He commended the work of the WFP and other UN agencies as well as the Government of Jordan to get assistance into Gaza.

"The efforts right here to collect and distribute food to people in need are absolutely essential," Blinken said. "The United States has worked from day one to open access routes into Gaza."

Rajnath on two-day visit to UK from today

NEW DELHI, Jan 7 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh will embark on a two-day visit to the UK on Monday to rejuvenate strategic and security ties between the two countries, including possible collaboration to jointly develop fighter jets and other military platforms.

The defence ministry, announcing the visit, said Singh and his British counterpart Grant Shapps are expected to discuss a wide range of issues

in the spheres of defence, security and industrial cooperation.

It said on Sunday that Singh is also expected to call on British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Foreign Minister David Cameron.

The Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will be accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising senior officials from the three services, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and department of defence production.

IAF's C-130J aircraft makes night landing at Kargil

NEW DELHI, Jan 7 (PTI)

FOR THE first time, a C-130J Super Hercules transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) carried out a

BOTTOMLINE

night landing at the high-altitude Kargil advanced

landing ground near the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan.

The night landing of the tactical lift aircraft with the elite Garud commandos on

board at the Kargil airstrip demonstrated the IAF's
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Bangladesh elections

Awami League nears victory

Hasina set for 4th term as PM

DHAKA, Jan 7 (PTI)

BANGLADESH Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is set to secure a record fourth straight term as her Awami League party was on Sunday leading in most of the seats in the general elections marred by sporadic violence and a boycott by the main Opposition BNP and its allies.

Hasina won the Gopalganj-3 seat for the eighth time since 1986. She bagged 249,965 votes while her nearest rival M Nizam
(Contd on page 5)



Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina casts her vote in the country's general elections, in Dhaka on Sunday. (PTI)