

# PM meets economists, takes up ideas to boost growth

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Ahead of the Union Budget, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday interacted with economists to discuss the state of the economy and ideas to push growth.

"Earlier today, interacted with eminent economists and heard their insightful views on issues pertaining to furthering growth," PM Modi said on microblogging site X.

The Budget will be unveiled by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23 and it will be her seventh consecutive Budget, a record eclipsing Morarji

Desai's six in a row.

This will be the first Budget of the new coalition govt, which assumed office in June. PM Modi was sworn-in for his third term.



Last month, President Droupadi Murmu in her address to Parliament said the Budget will have several historic steps and the pace of reforms would be accelerated.

The Budget is being presented against the backdrop of global challenges and geopolitical tensions. It is expected to spell out the steps for govt's Viksit Bharat strategy and ensure that India emerges as a developed country by 2047.

The economy is in a swe-

et spot and is expected to continue to grow around the 7% range for the next few years, led by robust domestic demand.

Sitharaman, Niti Aayog vice chairman Suman Bery and his team of advisors and B V R Subrahmanyam attended the meeting. Noted economists such as Ashok Gulati, Surjit Bhalla also expressed their views. Eminent banker and financial market expert K V Kamath and chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran also participated in the meeting. FM has held several rounds of discussions with various stakeholders in the lead up to the Budget and the views will serve as crucial inputs.

# US finalising Gaza truce deal, troop pullout: Report

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The US is working on a ceasefire deal in Gaza that involves withdrawal of Israeli and Hamas forces, an "interim governance" arrangement during which security would be provided by a US-trained force of Arabs who support the Palestinian Authority, release of Israeli hostages and a surge in humanitarian aid to civilians, as per a columnist in Washington Post.

The column, by foreign affairs specialist David Ignatius, quotes an unnamed senior US official as saying that "the framework is agreed" and that the parties were now "negotiating details of how it will be implemented." To forge the deal, US Middle East adviser Brett McGurk and CIA director William J Burns have been shuttling among regional capitals since Nov, it said.

The plan is to be implemented in three stages, Ignatius wrote, quoting officials. "First would be a six-week ceasefire, during which Hamas would release 33 Israeli hostages, including all female prisoners, all men over 50 and all who are wounded. Israel would release hundreds of Palestinians from its prisons and withdraw its troops from densely populated areas toward the eastern border of Gaza. Humanitarian aid would flow in, hospitals would be repaired, and crews would begin clearing rubble."

The second phase would begin with an interim governance plan in which neither Hamas nor Israel would rule Gaza, Ignatius wrote. Security



Residents walk through rubble in Gaza City after Israel army's withdrawal

## Army failed to protect Israelis on Oct 7, finds 1st military report; probe PM role, says def min

Israeli military published Thursday findings of a first probe into its own security failings during the Oct 7 Hamas attack, acknowledging it hadn't protected citizens of one of the worst hit communities, Kibbutz Be'eri. The probe examined the chain of events, fighting and security forces' conduct. It, however, did not find fault in tank fire toward a house where militants were holding 15 hostages, an incident that has drawn criticism. "The team found that the civilians inside were not hurt by the tank shells," it said.

Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant, meanwhile, called for a state inquiry into the failings. He said the probe should investigate Gallant himself and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu has dismissed past calls to form a state inquiry. REUTERS

would be provided by a "force trained by the US and backed by moderate Arab allies, drawn from a core group of about 2,500 supporters of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza who have already been vetted by Israel". As per a US official, Ignatius wrote, Hamas had told mediators it was "prepared to relinquish authority to the interim governance arrangement". The third phase would involve a "multi-year reconstruction plan" along the lines of a UN resolution.

Ignatius said the deal, if it goes through, would be a ringing validation of US President

Biden's "patient diplomacy", balancing America's role as peacemaker in the region with strong military support for Israel. "It would also create a potential valedictory moment for the president, affording him a chance to step back honourably from his quest for a second term or, conversely, to double down," he wrote.

The columnist, however, added that US officials were treading with caution because, "although the framework is in place, a final pact probably isn't imminent, and the details are complex and will take time to work through".

# For first time, Nato calls China a 'decisive enabler' of Russia's war against Ukraine

## Demands Beijing Halt Shipments Of 'Weapons Components' & Threatens That Support For Moscow Will Come At A Cost

## Washington hopes Delhi will persuade Moscow to end war

**Washington:** After decades of viewing China as a distant threat, Nato on Wednesday accused Beijing of becoming "a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine," and demanded that it halt shipments of "weapons components" and other technology critical to the rebuilding of the Russian military. The statement is contained in a declaration approved by the 32 leaders of the alliance.

It is a major departure for Nato, which until 2019 never officially mentioned China as a concern. Now, for the first time, the alliance has joined in Washington's denunciations of China's military support for Russia. But the declaration contains an implicit threat that China's growing support for Russia will come at a cost.

China "cannot enable the largest war in Europe in recent history without this negatively impacting its interests and reputation," the declaration said, particularly calling out "its large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial base."

Even a year ago, European leaders were hesitant to challenge Beijing, especially nations like Germany that view China as a critical market for high-end cars and luxury goods. Many European leaders initially dismissed the agreement reached in early 2022, just before the Beijing Olympics, for a "partnership without limits" signed by Russia Prez Putin and Chinese Prez Xi. But 29 months after the



Biden told Ukraine Prez Zelensky on Thursday that he would be announcing a new security package for Kyiv. 'We will stay with you, period,' he told Zelensky ahead of a bilateral meeting amid the Nato summit in Washington

## China tells Nato not to create chaos in Asia, rejects label of 'enabler' of Ukraine war

China accused Nato on Thursday of seeking security at the expense of others and told the alliance not to bring the same "chaos" to Asia. "Nato hyping up China's responsibility on the Ukraine issue is unreasonable and has sinister motives," foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a daily briefing. He maintained that China has a fair and objective stance on the Ukraine issue. Lin said that China's trade with Russia is legitimate and reasonable and based on World Trade Organization rules. China has also expressed concern about Nato's budding relationships with countries in the region. Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea sent their leaders or deputies to the Nato summit this week. "China urges Nato to ... stop interfering in China's internal politics and smearing China's image and not create chaos in the Asia-Pacific after creating turmoil in Europe," Lin said. AP

invasion of Ukraine, that view has changed. While China has heeded warnings not to supply Russia with full weapons systems, it has done everything short of that, providing computer chips, advanced software and the components needed for Russia to rebuild a defence industrial base that churned out faulty and outdated equipment.

The intelligence evidence

was provided to Nato countries by the Biden administration, in an effort to win over skeptics who argued that China was not a central player in the war. That succeeded, but only after the US published the names, in a treasury department economic sanctions order, of Chinese front companies and manufacturers that were funneling the technology to Russia. NYT

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

**Washington:** Amid publicly expressed concerns from the state department over PM Narendra Modi's meetings with Russia's Prez Putin, Pentagon on Wednesday said the US "will continue to view India as a strategic partner... will continue to have a robust dialogue with them", while hoping New Delhi will play a role in persuading Moscow to end its war on Ukraine. Pentagon's remarks come even as Nato appears to see the emergence of a Russia-China axis.

"India and Russia have had a relationship for a very long time. From a US perspective, India is a strategic partner with whom we continue to engage in full and frank dialogue to include their relationship with Russia," Pentagon press secretary Major General Pat Ryder told reporters, in the backdrop of the Nato summit in Washington, where the alliance called China a "decisive enabler" of Russia in its war on Ukraine.

Amid critical commentary in the US media that Modi's trip to Moscow showed Putin was not as isolated as claimed by the Biden administration, Ryder suggested the Russian prez may be trying to represent the visit in such a manner but "the fact of the matter is Prez Putin's war of choice has isolated Russia from the rest of the world,

and it has come at great cost". He pointed out that Modi met recently with Ukraine's Prez Zelensky and offered his assurances that India will continue to do everything within its means to support a peaceful solution to the war. "I think we trust India will support efforts to realise an enduring and just peace for Ukraine and will convey to Mr Putin the importance of adhering to the UN charter and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity," he added.

The Biden administration's (and Nato's) view of Russia and its invasion of Ukraine is undercut by the fact that ex-prez Trump takes a more benign view of Moscow, believing that the US "deep state" is unnecessarily stoking wars, in part by extending Nato to Russia's borders. The possibility of Trump's return to the White House has many European leaders expressing apprehension about the future of Nato. Trump has been dismissive about Nato, and on Wednesday he was denigrating it. "I didn't know what the hell Nato was too much before," he said at a rally. "But it didn't take me long to figure it out. The first thing I figured out was they were not paying. We were paying almost fully for Nato. And I said that's unfair." He then went in to relate how he told a shocked Nato ally the US would not protect it from Russia if it did not pay its share of the alliance funding.

# Army hands over camp where Dalai Lama rested in '59 to Assam

**Dhrubajyoti Malakar** | TNN

**Guwahati:** Lama Camp in Sonitpur district, where the 14th Dalai Lama rested during his escape from Tibet to India on March 31, 1959, has been transferred from Indian Army to Assam forest department.

This collaborative effort aims to conserve and safeguard the natural environment surrounding the camp, a sprawl of 102 acres and part of Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary.

The sanctuary, a pristine habitat for various wildlife species, has been facing challenges due to human encroachment in neighbouring areas. To tackle this, divisional forest officer of Western Assam Wildlife Division requested the Army to hand

over the camp to the forest department. The dept plans to relocate a forest battalion to the camp to protect elephants and other wildlife in the sanctuary.

The Army responded swiftly to the request and provisionally handed over the land and assets while awaiting approval from the defence ministry. This temporary measure allows forest guards to be stationed at the camp to protect wildlife.

Established by the Indian Army in 1967 and named in honour of the 14th Dalai Lama, the camp has been used by the Army for more than half a century. On July 10, the administrative commandant of Misamari military station officially handed over the camp to the field director of Nameri Tiger Reserve.

# BIMSTEC nations talk connectivity, trade

## EAM Calls For Infusing New Energies

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** India hosted BIMSTEC foreign ministers' retreat on Thursday with external affairs minister **S Jaishankar** urging his counterparts to harbour higher aspirations and send out a message that they are determined to infuse new energies, new resources and a new commitment into cooperation among the Bay of Bengal nations.

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) brings together seven countries of South and South-East Asia for multi-faceted cooperation. The BIMSTEC Charter had come into effect from May 20 this year.

Addressing the retreat, Jaishankar said global and regional developments also made it imperative that the member-states find more solutions amongst ourselves.

"There are long-standing goals such as capacity-building and economic cooperation that have acquired a new urgency. And not least, a grouping that is so complementary and so congenial in its membership should surely harbour higher aspira-

tions. Our hope is that these would be expressed as shared and ambitious BIMSTEC vision," he said.

Since it blocked the SAARC summit process in 2016 because of Pakistan's support to cross-border terrorism, India has increasingly focused on BIMSTEC to intensify cooperation with its neighbourhood.



"Each of these endeavours is being purposed with a specific focus on the Bay of Bengal, where collaborative potential has long remained under-realized. Our challenge is to change that for the better, and to do so rapidly. The retreat is meant to exchange ideas openly, candidly and fruitfully. Our message should be clear — that we are all determined to infuse new energies, new resources and a new commitment into cooperation among the Bay of Bengal nations," said Jaishankar.

The discussions were focused on connectivity, institutional building, cooperation in trade and business, collaboration in health and space, digital public infrastructure, capacity building and societal exchanges, as well as weighing on the merits of new mechanisms, according to the minister.

# 31 of 36 states/UTs have met goal to stabilise population

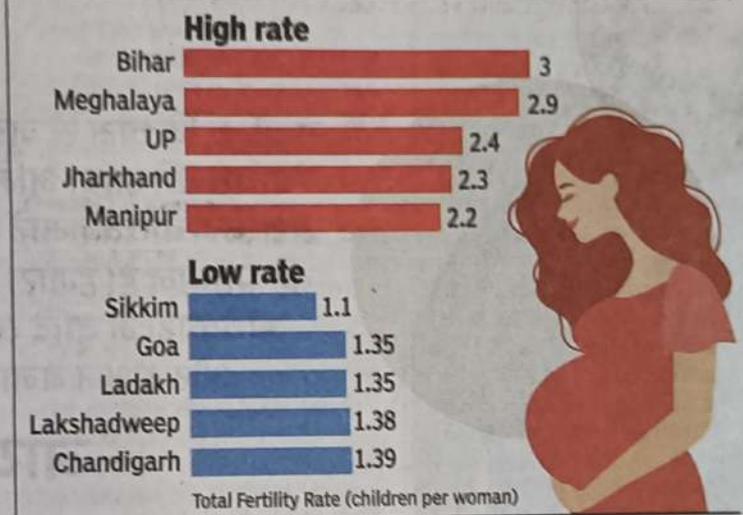
## Have Achieved Replacement Level Of Fertility Of 2.1, Says Govt

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New Delhi: Thirty-one out of 36 states and Union Territories in the country have achieved the replacement level of fertility of 2.1, the average number of children per woman needed to maintain a stable population size. Only five states — Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya and Manipur — continued to have a higher than desired replacement level of fertility, govt data showed.

On World Population Day on Thursday, health minister J P Nadda and minister of state for health Anupriya Patel said targeted steps would be taken in states with high Total Fertility Rate (TFR), or children per woman. "The goal of Viksit Bharat (developed India) can only be achieved when the health of India's families is maintained which can be achieved by

### WHERE STATES STAND



smaller families," Nadda said. Patel said more than 65% of India's population was in the reproductive age group which made it pertinent to ensure that they were provided with choices and not burdened with unplanned family growth. Highlighting the ex-

pansion of the family planning programme, she said, "While earlier it used to be a two-phased programme, it has now been expanded to three phases: preparatory phase, community participation and service delivery." Patel said seven decades

of family programme activities had shown results where 31 of 36 states/UTs had reached replacement level of TFR. She encouraged Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Meghalaya and Manipur to take up concerted activities to bring down TFR.

"It is also encouraging to note that acceptance of modern contraceptives in the country has increased to over 56%," she said.

In 1950, India had a TFR of 6.18 which reduced to 4.6 in 1980. In 2021, TFR reduced further to 1.91 which is below the replacement level needed to maintain a stable population size. Recently, a study claimed that by 2050, India's TFR will reduce to 1.29.

Poonam Mutreja, executive director of Population Foundation of India, said as countries develop economically, the cost of raising children increases, leading families to have fewer children.

# After PM's Russia trip, US says don't take our ties for granted

## No Such Thing As Strategic Autonomy In Times Of Conflict: Envoy

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

While India's strategic autonomy was said to have been exemplified by PM Narendra Modi's visit to Russia, US ambassador to India Eric Garcetti has warned against taking the India-US relationship for granted, saying there is no such thing as strategic autonomy in times of conflict.

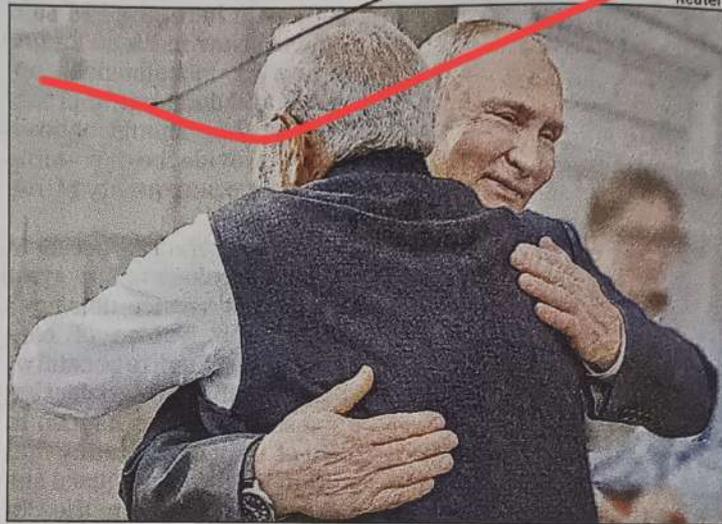
Garcetti's remarks followed repeated comments by the State Department, even while Modi was in Moscow, expressing concerns about In-

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dia's ties with Russia.

Speaking at a conference a day after Modi's visit to Russia and Austria concluded, Garcetti said he knew India and he respected that India likes its strategic autonomy, but in times of conflict, there is no such thing as strategic autonomy.

"We will in crisis moments need to know each other. I don't care what title we put to it, but we will need to know that we are trusted friends, brothers and sisters, and colleagues in times of need," said the ambassador.



Reuters

### Russia not a good bet, warns Sullivan

USNSA Jake Sullivan on Thursday said, "We've made clear to every country, including India, that a bet on Russia as a long-term, reliable partner is not a good bet." Moscow would side with Beijing over New Delhi in case of a conflict between the two Asian giants, he added. But he acknowledged that countries like India have a historic relationship with Russia and it's not going to change dramatically overnight. PTI

### THE HUG THAT SPARKED AN OUTRAGE

"It's important for us as Americans and as Indians to remember the more we put into this relationship, the more we will get out. The more we insist on a kind of cynical calculation in the place of a trusted relationship, the less we will get... As I also remind my Indian friends, while it is wider and it is deeper than it's ever been, it is not yet deep enough... that if we take it for granted from the Indian side towards America... I'll fight a lot of defence battles trying to help this relation-

ship ahead," added Garcetti.

Modi's hug of president Vladimir Putin on Monday, around the time Russia was alleged to have bombed a children's hospital in Kyiv, had sparked outrage in the West. While the US expressed concern saying it would closely follow what Modi was going to tell Putin in his public remarks, Ukraine president Zelensky launched an attack on PM saying his embrace of "a bloody criminal" was a devastating blow to peace efforts.

Modi did seek to address the anger in the West the next

day by publicly telling Putin he found killing of children heartbreaking and that the Ukraine conflict was not going to be resolved on the battlefield. However, what made Modi's 2-day engagement worse for some of the Western countries was that it came close on the heels of India's refusal to endorse a joint declaration at the Switzerland peace summit which said Ukraine's territorial integrity must form the basis for any peace process. India has held that any peace effort must involve both sides.

## Rainfall deficit down to 2.3%, heavy showers soon, says IMD

**New Delhi:** Overall monsoon rainfall in June ended with a 11% deficit, turned to surplus during July 5-10, but once again fell into negative zone by reporting 2.3% less than normal cumulative (June 1-July 11) rainfall as on Thursday.

This deficit will, however, soon be recovered as IMD predicted "widespread rainfall with heavy to very heavy falls" along the West Coast and heavy spell over central, east & north-east India till July 17. "Heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely over Konkan & Goa, Madhya Maharashtra and Coastal Karnataka during July 12-15," it said in its forecast on Thursday.

The current overall deficit of 2.3% is mainly due to 7.5% of less than normal rainfall in central India and 4.5% of deficit rainfall in east & northeast India. Surplus rainfall of 8.6% in peninsular India and 1.4% in northwest India has, however, not only reduced the countrywide deficit to 2.3% but also improved the water storage situation in reservoirs in these regions.

As a result, live water storage available in 150 key reservoirs increased to 22% of total live storage capacity of these reservoirs on July 4 from 20% on June 27. "Water storage situation will gradually improve as the remaining period of the monsoon season is expected to receive fairly good rainfall," said an official of Central Water Commission.

Good rains in the last fortnight in several parts of the country also helped speed up the ongoing sowing operations of Kharif crops. It brought the overall acreage as on July 5 to the level which was 14% more than the last year. TNN