

India asks Pakistan to take strong action against JeM chief Masood Azhar

NEW DELHI, Dec 6 (PTI)

INDIA on Friday demanded strong action from Pakistan against Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar, after a report emerged that he delivered a speech recently at a public gathering in Bahawalpur.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said if the report is correct, then it has exposed Pakistan's "duplicity" in containing terrorist activities.

"We demand that strong action be taken against him (Azhar) and he should be brought to justice. There has been denial that he is not there in Pakistan," Jaiswal said. "If the reports are correct, then it exposes the duplicity of Pakistan. Masood Azhar is involved in cross-border terror attacks on India and we want that strong action be taken against him," he added.

Jaiswal made the remarks in response to a question at his weekly media briefing.

Nirbhaya Fund: Fast Track Courts decide 2.87 lakh rape, POCSO cases in 6 years

- While the average disposal rate of rape and POCSO Act cases in regular courts is estimated at 3.26 cases per court per month, FTSCs achieve an average of 8.01 cases per month.

NEW DELHI, Dec 6 (IANS)

THE 750 Fast Track Special Courts, including exclusive POCSO Courts, in the country have decided 2.87 lakh cases since their creation following the enactment of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018, the Lok Sabha was informed on Friday.

Minister of State (Independent Charge), for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal, in a written reply in Lok Sabha, said that the Centrally-sponsored scheme has been extended twice, with the latest extension up to March 31, 2026,

targeting the establishment of 790 courts. "As per the inputs received from High Courts, as on October 31, 2024, 750 FTSCs, including 408 exclusive POCSO Courts, are functional in 30 States/UTs.

These courts have disposed of more than 2,87,000 cases as of October 31, 2024," MoS Meghwal said in response to questions by Suresh Kumar Kashyap and K. Sudhakar.

Highlighting the impact of FTSCs on the disposal rate of rape and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases, MoS Meghwal said, "The disposal rate of rape and POCSO Act cases in Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) appears to be significantly higher than in regular courts."

The FTSCs have been set up and operationalised under the Nirbhaya Fund which was created following the Nirbhaya gangrape case in Delhi on December 16, 2012.

FM: 5.4% GDP growth doesn't indicate systemic slowdown

'India To Stay Fastest Growing Major Eco Over Next Few Yrs'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Asserting that Sept quarter growth numbers do not indicate a systemic slowdown, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said that economic activity will pick up in third quarter and India will remain the fastest growing major economy over the next few years.

"The fourth quarter, which was very good, had an impact on Q1. So, the numbers were not alarming. When quarter two (Q2) slows down and the growth numbers are reflecting (that), we should put it in the context of an economy and a governance structure, which was focused on elections (in Q1). It's not a systemic slowdown. It's more (due to) the absence of public expenditure, capital expenditure. I expect Q3 to make up for all this. The growth number is something, which is not necessarily going to get badly affected. We need to push up on many other factors. India, not just for this year but for next year and the

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Nirmala Sitharaman, FINANCE MINISTER



year after also, has very good chances to remain the fastest growing economy,” Sitharaman said at an event organised by Ananta Centre.

The Indian economy grew 5.4% during July-Sept, the slowest pace of expansion in seven quarters, prompting most research agencies as well as RBI to lower the projection for the full year. Govt is, however, sticking to its projection of 6.5% GDP growth during the current fiscal year.

The minister's comments during an interaction with

15th Finance Commission chairman NK Singh indicated that govt remained optimistic about the prospects in the medium term, although she did acknowledge some of the challenges due to the global economic situation.

“Plateauing of demand, especially in developed countries is a matter of concern for us. Equally, for agriculture, climate change is also bearing heavily upon us. Third, in traditional areas, where we had strengthened, labour-intensive items such

Industrial policy in Budget mooted

New Delhi: Economists on Friday suggested govt to come out with an industrial policy to boost manufacturing and relax the fiscal consolidation roadmap in the Budget for next fiscal.

The FM on Friday met eminent economists to seek their views on the Union Budget for 2025-26. AGENCIES

as textiles, leather or footwear, we still have challenges because slowing demand (in developed markets) is not giving that additional marginal benefit out of exports.”

She, however, drew comfort from the domestic economy. “The domestic market is also growing, the purchasing power of Indians is improving. There are concerns about wages saturating. We are quite seized of the factors, which may have a play on India's own consumption.”

Iran says it conducted successful space launch; draws flak from West

MANAMA (Bahrain), Dec 6 (AP)

IRAN said on Friday it conducted a successful space launch, the latest for its programme the West alleges improves Tehran's ballistic missile programme.

Iran conducted the launch using its Simorgh programme, a satellite-carrying rocket that had had a series of failed launches. The launch took place at Iran's Imam Khomeini Spaceport in rural Semnan province.

There was no immediate independent confirmation the launch was successful.

The announcement comes as heightened tensions grip the wider Middle East over Israel's continued war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and as an uneasy ceasefire holds in Lebanon.

The United States has previously said Iran's satellite launches defy a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution and called on Tehran to undertake no activity involving ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. United Nations sanctions related to Iran's ballistic missile programme expired in October 2023.

Quad is growing; India to host summit in 2025: Jaishankar

■ Says, it's one of the most expansive inter-governmental frameworks

NEW DELHI, Dec 6 (PTI)

THE Quad is growing and its agenda makes it one of the "most expansive" inter-governmental frameworks, and the incoming Donald Trump administration is unlikely to reduce support for the coalition, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Friday.

In an interactive session at the India-Japan Forum here, Jaishankar recalled how Trump's first tenure as the US President



supported the shaping of the Quad and its subsequent growth.

The Quad, comprising India, the United States, Australia and Japan, has been focusing on ensuring peace, stability and inclusive growth in the Indo-Pacific against the backdrop of China's growing military muscle-flexing in the region.

"In 2017, it was the first year of the Trump administration when it (Quad) started at the vice-minister's level. Then in 2019, it was again under the Trump administration that it moved from the vice-minister's level to the foreign minister's level," Jaishankar said.

"And there is every reason for us to expect that they would say we got it right the first time, it's done well and therefore, we should keep with it," he added.

India is scheduled to host the next Quad Summit in 2025.

The Quad is growing and its agenda makes it "one of the most expansive sort of inter-governmental coordination that is today in evidence", Jaishankar said.

On India's ties with China following the eastern Ladakh border row, Jaishankar referred to the implementation of the latest disengagement arrangement and said challenges remain with regard to de-escalation on the LAC. "Our entire relationship with China was predicated on the fact that the border areas would remain peaceful and stable and we had agreements to ensure that. In 2020, the Chinese chose to bring a lot of forces to the border areas and obviously, we responded with counter-deployments," he said.

Referring to the completion of the disengagement process, the external affairs minister said it took almost four years and a half.

"We still have challenges left with us. We still have to de-escalate because what we have done is disengage forces from close proximity," he said.

Jaishankar suggested that the focus will now be on de-escalation as a very large number of forces are still deployed in the region. "Now, we have to sit down and discuss with China how we rebuild our relationship and that is an exercise that still has to be undertaken," he said.

The eastern Ladakh military stand-off between India and China began in May 2020 and a deadly clash at the Galwan valley in June that year resulted in a severe strain in ties between the two neighbours.