

India inks defence deals WORTH Rs 39,125 CR



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the signing of five major capital acquisition contracts in New Delhi on Friday. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (PTI)

INDIA on Friday sealed five major defence acquisition con-

tracts worth Rs 39,125 crore including procurement of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, radars, weapon sys-

tems and aero-engines for MiG-29 jets as part of efforts to boost the combat capabilities of the armed forces.

The megaprojects were firmed up amid India's lingering border row with China in eastern Ladakh, and they will be implemented under the broad framework of the Government's policy to boost domestic defence manufacturing.

The contracts for the procurement of the platforms and weapons systems were signed in presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane, under whose guidance these deals fructified, an official readout said.

UN Environment Assembly adopts India's resolution on sustainable lifestyles

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (PTI)

THE United Nations Environment Assembly on Friday adopted India's resolution on sustainable lifestyles at its sixth session held in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Union Environment Ministry said all participating member states adopted the resolution which was co-sponsored by Sri Lanka and Bolivia.

The UNEA's sixth session started on February 6 and ended on Friday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been championing the Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE movement), urging countries to adopt planet-friendly living practices and move away from deeply consumerist behaviours. He envisioned this concept at the World Leaders' Summit during the UN climate conference in Glasgow and launched Mission LiFE on October 20, 2022, in the presence of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the Statue of Unity in Gujarat.

The UNEA reaffirmed the commitment

made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which emphasises the three dimensions of sustainable development -- integrated, indivisible, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing.

This commitment aims to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development. It also reaffirmed the commitment made in the 2030 Agenda to ensure that people everywhere have access to relevant information and awareness for sustainable development, fostering lifestyles in harmony with nature.

The resolution recognises the potential of behavioural changes toward sustainable lifestyles in contributing to the achievement of the three dimensions of sustainable development. It takes note of the work of the 10-year framework programme, including the 'One Planet Network Programme' on sustainable lifestyles and education, along with other international, regional, and national initiatives.

India to see warmer start to summer this year: IMD

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (PTI)

INDIA is likely to experience a warmer start to the summer season this year with El Nino conditions predicted to continue through the season, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday.

More heatwave days than normal are predicted over north-east peninsular India -- Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and north interior Karnataka -- and many parts of Maharashtra and Odisha.

The country is likely to record above-normal rainfall in March (more than 117 per cent of the long-period average of 29.9



mm).

India is likely to see above-normal maximum and minimum temperatures in most parts of the country in the March to May period,

IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said at a press conference.

Heatwave conditions are not expected over north and central India in March, he said. Lok Sabha polls are likely to be held in April-May. Mohapatra said that the prevailing El Nino conditions -- the periodic warming of waters in the central Pacific Ocean -- will continue through the summer season and neutral conditions are likely to develop thereafter. La Nina conditions -- generally associated with good monsoon rainfall in India -- are likely to set in by the second half of the monsoon season.

PFMS

Facilitated Direct Benefit Transfer worth Rs 34 lakh crore: Sitharaman

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (PTI)

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of Rs 34 lakh crore has been facilitated by the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) and asked accounts officers to further enhance efficiency and transparency of the system.

In a written message to the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) and the Indian Civil Accounts Organisation (ICAO) on the occasion of the 48th Civil Accounts Day, Sitharaman said PFMS has been the cornerstone of establishing an efficient fund flow system alongside a robust payment and accounting network.

PFMS is the management information system used by officers of the Indian Civil



Accounts Service to maintain the accounts of the Government. It is also used to transfer funds to beneficiary accounts of various Government schemes via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

“The Direct Benefit Transfer mechanism, facilitated through PFMS, has led to the transfer of Rs 34 lakh crore from the Government. This is a testament to the system’s effectiveness in eliminating inefficiencies and ensuring that the benefits are delivered directly to the citizens without any leak-

ages,” Sitharaman said in her message, read out by Finance Secretary T V Somanathan at the Civil Accounts Day event.

She also highlighted that 1,081 different schemes, including those of State Governments, have been seamlessly integrated into the DBT.

PFMS, which is developed and implemented by the Controller General of Accounts under the Department of Expenditure, has played a pivotal role in revolutionising the financial administration of the Government.

“This has not only facilitated a real-time, reliable, and meaningful management information system but also has paved the way for a more transparent, accountable, and people-centric governance...,” Sitharaman said.

12.5 mn kids in India obese in 2022: Study

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (PTI)

ABOUT 12.5 million children aged between five and 19 in India were overweight in 2022, according to a global analysis published in 'The Lancet' journal. Of the 12.5, 7.3 million were boys and 5.2 million girls.

The total number of children, adolescents and adults worldwide living with obesity has surpassed one billion. These trends, together with the declining prevalence of people who are underweight since 1990, make obesity the most common form of malnutrition in most countries. Obesity and underweight are both forms of malnutrition and are detrimental to people's health in many ways.

The latest study provides a highly detailed picture of global trends in both forms of malnutrition over the last 33 years. The analysis by the NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC) and the WHO estimates that among the world's children and adolescents, the rate of obesity in 2022 was four times the rate in 1990. "It is very concerning that the epidemic of obesity that was evident among adults in much of the world in 1990 is now mirrored in school-aged children and adolescents," said Prof Majid Ezzati from Imperial College London in the UK.

"At the same time, hundreds of millions are still affected by undernutrition, particularly in some of the poorest parts of the world. To successfully tackle both forms of malnutrition it is vital we significantly improve the availability and affordability of healthy, nutritious foods," Ezzati said.

Among adults, the global obesity rate more than doubled in women and nearly tripled in men. In total, 159 million children and adolescents and 879 million adults were living with obesity in 2022, according to the study.

Thailand replaces its Ambassador to WTO after **strong protest by India**

■ **By Rajesh Rai**

ABU DHABI, Mar 1 (PTI)

THAILAND has replaced its Ambassador to WTO Pimchanok Vonkorpon Pitfield from here following a strong protest lodged by India on her contentious comment on New Delhi's rice procurement programme, a top Government official said on Friday.

The official said that Pitfield has been asked to report back to Thailand after the 13th Ministerial conference (MC), which has entered the fifth day of talks. She has been learnt to have replaced by the Thai Foreign Secretary.

India has expressed strong disappointment over Pitfield's remarks
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