

# Lanka survived 2 tough years of economic crisis;

## Possibly because of India's support: Wickremesinghe



COLOMBO, June 22 (PTI)

**SRI LANKA** has survived two difficult years of its economic crisis and it was possible because of the financial support of USD 3.5 billion from India, President Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Saturday and emphasised his commitment to maintain a strong partnership with New Delhi.

Addressing the 31st All India Partners Meet in Colombo from June 20-22, Wickremesinghe said that he during his last visit to India to attend the new government's swearing-in discussed with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi the core areas of partnership.

"Having now survived two difficult years, I must acknowledge that this was possible because India gave us a loan of USD 3.5 billion. All that will be repaid," he said.

Wickremesinghe said that

sustainable energy is one of the grave areas that the two nations would be jointly working on.

"When I was in Delhi last week, I discussed with Prime Minister Modi the need to accelerate the joint programme that we have decided, agreed on. So the major ones are identified. Now this will show the new path we are taking, and a number of projects, all will be in one parcel," he said.

He added that Sri Lanka had discussed a fair number of proposals.

"First is the grid interconnection between Sri Lanka and India, so that sustainable energy can be transmitted to India, where you all need that very badly. We have the Sampur solar power project, which is a Government to Government (G2G) project, and a three-island project, which is where we hope the groundbreaking can take place in July," he said.

**SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT TO PROMOTE ECO-TOURISM, WETLAND CONSERVATION:** Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe has emphasised Sri Lanka's commitment to advance eco-tourism through the conservation of wetlands, according to the President's Media Division.



# Nirmala holds pre-Budget meeting with Finance Ministers of States

NEW DELHI, June 22 (PTI)

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday underlined Centre's support to States through timely tax devolution and GST compensation arrears to stimulate growth.

At the pre-budget meeting with State Finance Ministers, Sitharaman also nudged States to take advantage of the scheme under which the Centre gives 50-year interest free loan to States for undertaking specified reforms.

In her remarks, the Union Finance Minister underlined the Union Government's support to States through timely tax devolution, Finance Commission grants, and arrears of GST Compensation being provided for providing stimulus to growth, an official statement said.

Regarding the 'Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment',



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with MoS Pankaj Chaudhary during the pre-Budget meeting with Finance Ministers of all the States and Union Territories (with Legislature) to take suggestions for the Union Budget 2024-25, in New Delhi, on Saturday. (PTI)

Sitharaman mentioned that while most of the loans are untied, a part of it is conditional-linked to citizen-centric reforms by States and sector-specific capital projects and requested the States to avail

these loans by fulfilling requisite criteria. Most States appreciated the centre's 'Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment' and gave some suggestions for further improvement.



# INDIA SHOWS INTEREST in mega Teesta river conservation project

India, B'desh sign 10 pacts to boost ties in critical areas such as digital domain, maritime sphere, blue economy, railways, space, green tech, health and medicine

NEW DELHI, June 22 (PTI)

**SENDING** a technical team by India to Bangladesh soon for a mega project to conserve and manage Teesta river, moving ahead to start negotiations on a comprehensive trade pact and boosting defence ties were among major outcomes of talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina on Saturday.

The decision to send an Indian technical team to hold talks on the conservation of the Teesta river within Bangladesh assumes significance as China was keenly eyeing the estimated USD one billion project notwithstanding reservations by New Delhi.

Hasina is expected to travel to China next month. In reflection of growing intensity in their ties, India and Bangladesh also firmed up a "futuristic vision" to further



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina during a meeting, at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Saturday. (PTI)

facilitate transformative cooperation in their engagement.

Separately, the two sides signed 10 agreements providing for bolstering ties in a range of critical areas such

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# NEET-PG POSTPONED

## NTA DG shunted out

NEW DELHI, June 22 (PTI)

**THE** Union Health Ministry on Saturday said it has decided to postpone the NEET-PG entrance examination, scheduled to be held on June 23, as a "precautionary measure" in the wake of recent allegations on the integrity of certain competitive exams.

National Testing Agency (NTA) Director General Subodh Singh was shunted out on Saturday, amid a massive controversy over alleged irregularities in competitive exams NEET and NET.

An official said he has been put on "compulsory wait" in the  
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### Former Isro chief to head panel formed to reform NTA

NEW DELHI, June 22 (IANS)

**THE** Centre on Saturday said that it has formed a high-level committee under the former ISRO Chief which will make the necessary recommendations regarding the smooth and fair conduct of exams through the NTA for NEET and other examinations.

The committee will work under



Radhakrishnan

the Chairmanship of K. Radhakrishnan, former Chairman, of ISRO and Chairman of BoG, IIT Kanpur.

"The committee will submit the report in two months and will make necessary recommendations on reform in the mechanism of the examination process,

improvement in data security

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# UAPA tribunal confirms ban on Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, Muslim League J&K faction



NEW DELHI, June 22 (PTI)

A TRIBUNAL set up under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on Saturday confirmed the Centre's decision to impose a five-year ban on the Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) and Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, Jammu and

Mujahideen, and were giving constant on ground support for carrying out militant operations in the Valley.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati and advocate Rajat Nair represented the government before the tribunal.

The Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) was declared

 The tribunal also upheld the Centre's contention that the organisations were acting on behalf of Pakistan-based terrorist organisations such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen, and were giving constant on ground support for carrying out militant operations in the Valley. 

Kashmir. The one-member tribunal of Delhi High Court judge Sachin Datta was constituted under the stringent anti-terror law in January to assess whether there was "sufficient cause" behind the imposition of the ban.

Upholding the ban, the tribunal held the two organisations were carrying out secessionist activities in the valley with help from across the border to realise the merger of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan and establish Islamic rule in the Union Territory.

The tribunal also upheld the Centre's contention that the organisations were acting on behalf of Pakistan-based terrorist organisations such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Hizbul

outlawed for five years by the Government under the UAPA on December 27, 2023 on account of being involved in anti-national and secessionist activities in the Union Territory.

Founded by deceased separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH) was outlawed for five years on December 31, 2023. The organisation was banned for fomenting terrorism and spreading anti-India propaganda in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Union Home Ministry, while imposing the ban, had said the leaders and members of TeH have been involved in raising funds through various sources, including Pakistan and its proxy organisations.