

Chaos at Bangladesh High Commission

VHP, Bajrang Dal protesters clash with police

■ The protests were held against the lynching of Hindu minorities in the strife-torn neighbouring nation

NEW DELHI, Dec 23 (PTI)

HOLDING saffron flags and shouting slogans against the lynching of a Hindu man in Bangladesh, hundreds of supporters of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal broke barricades

and clashed with police near the fortified Bangladesh High Commission on Tuesday.

Several barricades lay in disarray as police struggled to contain the surge.

The high security area witnessed a beefed-up police presence in the morning ahead of the protest announced by the Hindu right against the lynching of a Hindu man in the strife-torn neighbouring nation.

The area had been secured

with seven layers of barricades and a reinforced presence of police and paramilitary.

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An officer said a 1,500-strong police force was deployed ahead of the demon-

stration. He said police managed to hold the protesters about 800 metres from the high commission. DTC buses were parked as an obstacle to thwart the protesters' bid to reach the high commission.

A sea of banners and placards bobbed in the air, reading denunciatory messages against the Bangladesh government. A placard read: "Hindu rakt ki ek ek boond ka hisaab chahiye (Each drop of blood of a Hindu must be accounted for)."

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Protesters break barricades as police officials stop Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal members during a protest outside the Bangladesh High Commission over attacks on Hindus in the neighbouring country, in New Delhi, on Tuesday. (ANI)

B'desh summons Indian envoy

DHAKA, Dec 23 (PTI)

BANGLADESH'S Foreign Ministry on Tuesday summoned Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma amid concerns over the security of Bangladeshi missions in India.

Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam summoned

India announces \$450 mn package for cyclone Ditwah-hit Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Dec 23 (PTI)

INDIA on Tuesday announced a reconstruction package of USD 450 million to cyclone Ditwah-hit Sri Lanka, as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met with the island nation's top leaders and assured Delhi's steadfast commitment to Colombo's rebuilding post-cyclone.

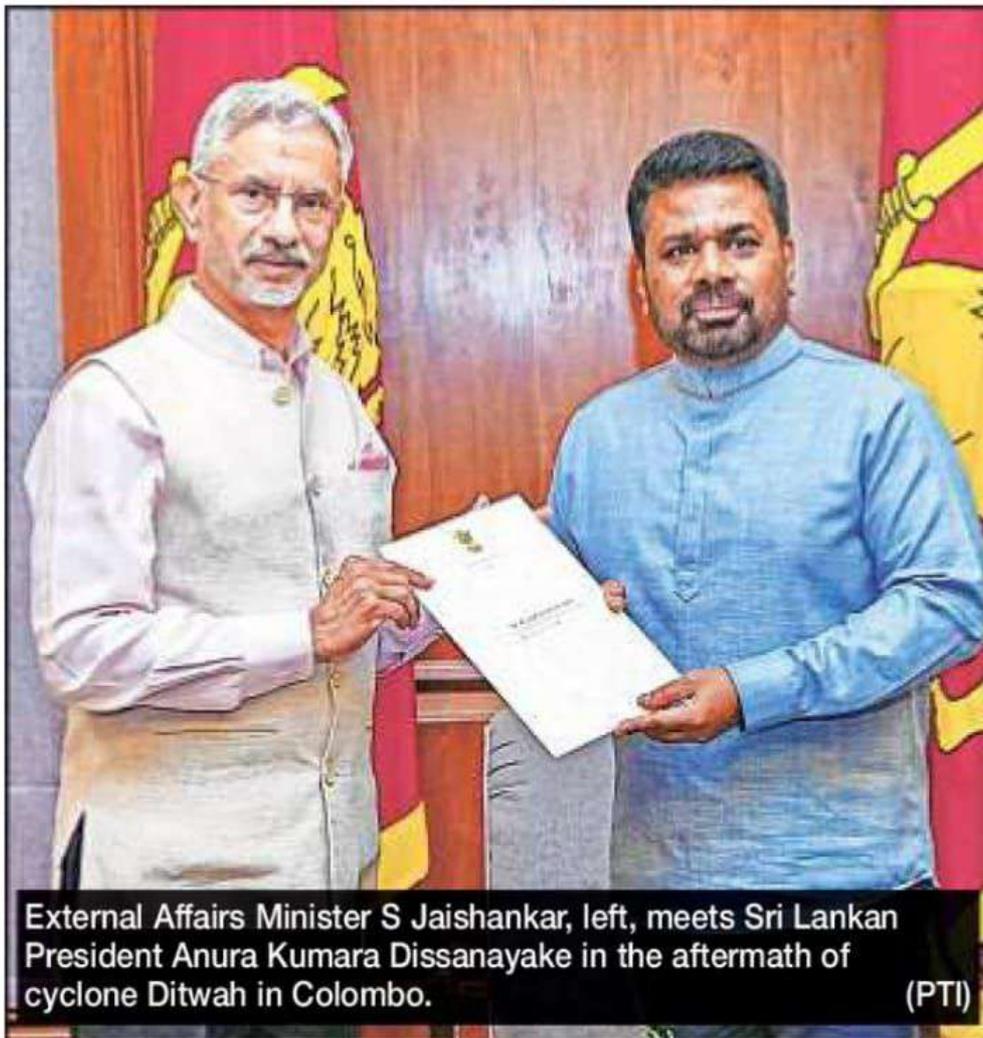
Jaishankar, who arrived here as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Special Envoy, said that it was natural for India to step forward at a time when Sri Lanka faced a crisis.

The Minister called President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and

conveyed PM Modi's warm wishes and message of solidarity in the aftermath of cyclone Ditwah.

"The Letter from Prime Minister Modi that I handed over builds on our First Responder role and commits a reconstruction package of USD 450 million to Sri Lanka," Jaishankar said while addressing the press alongside Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath. Jaishankar said he had a detailed discussion with the President on the damage caused by Cyclone Ditwah and their talks centred around how expeditiously India's assistance package can be delivered.

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External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, left, meets Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in the aftermath of cyclone Ditwah in Colombo.

(PTI)

Countdown for launch of ISRO's **Bluebird Block-2 Mission** begins in Sriharikota

SRIHARIKOTA, Dec 23 (PTI)

THE 24-hour countdown for the launch of LVM3-M6 rocket, which will carry a new generation US communication satellite commenced here on Tuesday, ISRO said.

In a dedicated commercial mission, ISRO is scheduled to launch the Bluebird Block-2 spacecraft on board its heavy lift launch vehicle LVM3-M6 at 8.54 am from the second launch pad at this spaceport on Wednesday.

Weighing 6,100 kg, the communication satellite would be the heaviest payload to be placed into the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) in LVM3 launch history, the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency said.

The previous heaviest was the LVM3-M5 Communication Satellite 03, weighing about 4,400 kg that was successfully launched by ISRO on November 2. Wednesday's mission is being undertaken as part of the commercial agreement signed between NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL)



and US-based AST SpaceMobile (AST and Science, LLC). NewSpace India Ltd is the commercial arm of ISRO.

The historic mission would deploy the next generation communication satellite designed to provide high-speed cellular broadband directly to smartphones worldwide.

India–NZ FTA opens new opportunities for exporters, boosts trade and investment

NEW DELHI, Dec 23 (IANS)

THE recently concluded Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and New Zealand (NZ) has opened up fresh opportunities for Indian exporters and is expected to give a major boost to key sectors such as textiles, marine products, engineering and MSMEs, former Chief Commissioner of Income Tax Dr Shikha Darbari said on Tuesday.

Speaking to IANS, Dr Darbari said that reduced tariffs in the New Zealand market will increase demand for Indian products and help domestic industries strengthen their presence globally. "The agreement is also likely to generate employment across these sectors, providing a positive push to the Indian economy," she noted.

She noted that the long-term trade agreement, valued at around



\$20 billion, aims to double bilateral trade between India and New Zealand over the next five years.

"This reflects Prime Minister Narendra Modi's global economic vision and the growing confidence of international investors in India," Dr Darbari added. Dr Darbari said that while India had earlier adopted a cautious approach towards FTAs, it is now entering into balanced and secure trade agreements

with developed nations.

This shift, she explained, highlights the Government's evolving trade diplomacy, which places strong emphasis on protecting investor interests while positioning India as a major global trading power through strategic partnerships. She further stated that the agreement is a significant step towards making India a leader in global trade.

"Under the PM Modi Government's 'Viksit Bharat 2047' vision, opening new markets and implementing foreign trade agreements will help expand India's trade footprint and strengthen its position as a global trade leader," she stated. This, she said, will not only reinforce India's economic strength but also establish the country as an influential force in global commerce. Dr Darbari also pointed out that the FTA will promote exports of GI-tagged Indian products and value-added agricultural goods.

This will help Indian farmers secure better prices for their produce and improve their financial condition.

She added that the Government is encouraging farmers to obtain indigenous patents and GI tags so they can compete more effectively in global markets.