

# PM Modi invites new Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman to visit India

NEW DELHI, Feb 17 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has invited Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to visit India and conveyed his best wishes to the newly-sworn-in Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader. The invitation was extended to Rahman through a letter handed over by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who called on Rahman in Dhaka after the latter took charge as the Prime Minister on Tuesday, officials said here.

After attending the swearing-in ceremony in Dhaka, Birla said India stands ready to support Bangladesh's endeavours to build a democratic, progressive and inclusive nation. "Glad to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the

new government of Bangladesh led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in Dhaka today. India stands ready to support Bangladesh's endeavours to build a democratic, progressive and inclusive nation," Birla posted on X.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India, Riaz Hamidullah, said in a post on X, "Prime Minister Tarique Rahman conveys his greetings to India and PM Narendra Modi to the visiting India Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at a courtesy meet following the swearing-in of the new government. "Speaker Birla conveyed wishes and an invitation to India. Both leaders expressed optimism to work together for the well-being of the people of Bangladesh and India."

# India, France sign pact for manufacturing Hammer missiles, renew defence coop

BENGALURU, Feb 17 (PTI)

INDIA and France on Tuesday renewed the 10-year defence cooperation agreement and signed an MoU for manufacturing Hammer missiles in the country.

The agreements were signed when Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his French counterpart Catherine Vautrin co-chaired the sixth India-France Annual Defence Dialogue in the city.

“The renewal of 10-year defence cooperation agreement was signed by the Defence Secretary from the Indian side and Deputy Director General for International Relations and Strategy from the French side,” an official statement said.

It added that an MoU on Joint Venture was also signed for the manufacturing of Hammer missiles in India between the Chief Managing Director (CMD), Bharat Electronics Limited and Executive Vice President, Safran Electronics and Defence.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh exchanges a handshake with France Minister of the Armed Forces and Veterans Catherine Vautrin during the 6th India-France Annual Defence Dialogue, in Bengaluru on Tuesday. (PTI)

According to the statement, both countries announced Reciprocal Deployment Officers at Indian Army and French Land Forces establishments.

The two leaders also discussed a range of bilateral security and defence issues, including priority areas for co-development and co-production of equipment.

# CBSE Class 10, 12 Board exams begin

## Over 46 lakh students appearing at over 8,000 centres

NEW DELHI, Feb 17 (PTI)

THE Class 10 and 12 CBSE board exams began on Tuesday with over 46 lakh students appearing at over 8,000 centres across the country and abroad, officials said. Class 10 students appeared for the Mathematics exam on Tuesday while Class 12 examination was scheduled for four subjects -- Biotechnology, Entrepreneurship, Shorthand (Hindi) and Shorthand (English).

"The Mathematics examinations, both Standard and Basic, were conducted smoothly and the students were well-prepared. However, an apparent difference was observed in students' perception and performance in the two levels of the paper. The Mathematics (Standard) was a



Students queue up outside an examination centre in Ranchi, on Tuesday. (PTI)

balanced paper and even well-structured," said Alka Kapur, Principal, Modern Public School, Shalimar Bagh. "It comprehensively covered all prescribed top-

ics, ensuring a fair division of weightage across the syllabus. The paper wasn't lengthy and students were able to complete the paper within the stipulated

time. In toto, the paper was considered manageable and student-friendly," she added.

While the Class 10 exams will conclude on March 10, the Class 12 exams will end on April 9.

The Board had cautioned students to reach their examination centres by 10 am keeping in mind the local conditions, traffic, weather conditions and distance.

"As observed in the past, certain unscrupulous elements attempt to mislead students and parents by spreading fake news on various social media platforms during the course of exams. Such misinformation often includes false claims of question paper leaks and circulation of purported question papers for Class 10 and 12 examinations of the Board," an official of the CBSE had said.

# Security forces on mission to erase Maoist ideology

■ Work is on both in the cities as well as remote areas to ensure that ideology of the movement is completely eradicated.

NEW DELHI, Feb 17 (IANS)

THE security forces are on course to meet the March 31 deadline set by Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, to wipe out each and every Maoist from India.

While operations on the ground continue and are at the fag end, the forces have also embarked upon a mission to ensure that the ideology too is wiped out completely.

A security official part of these operations said that this is an equally important step in the battle against the Maoists.

Sometimes, the ideology can be more dangerous and hence it ought to even linger on, the official said.

Work is on both in the cities

as well as the remote areas to ensure that the ideology of the movement is completely eradicated.

The approaches for the urban and rural areas are different, the officer explained.

Last year, the Intelligence agencies had sounded an alert about how some are trying to put the ideology of these Maoists out in the urban areas.

In 2019, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) took up the probe into a case, what went on to being called the urban naxalite case.

It was found that there were many who were running NGOs in the name of social work.

In reality, they were receiving foreign funds and the same was being used to fund the movement. Several arrests were made and the NIA learnt that major conspiracies were being hatched to hurt the country's security. These persons had also planned on targeting high profile personalities, the probe also found.

An Intelligence Bureau official said that there is a two-pronged approach that the agencies have taken. Some associated with the movement were infiltrating protests such as the one against air pollution.

Under the garb of an issue of concern, they were raising slogans in favour of the Maoists and even criticising the security agencies for gunning down these people in the jungles.

In the rural areas, the CRPF has been identifying memorials which had been built for top Maoists who had been slain by the security forces.

All these memorials are being wiped out by the CRPF personnel. This drive is currently being carried out in Sukma, Bastar and Bijapur in Chhattisgarh.

So far, the security personnel have razed 53 memorials that had been built by the CPI (Maoist) to honour their top commanders and leaders. These memorials that have been put up in the forest areas are being razed.

# US, Iran hold second round of nuclear talks

## Iran fires live missiles towards Strait of Hormuz in drill

■ By Jamey Keaten and  
Stephanie Liechtenstein

GENEVA, Feb 17 (AP)

**THE** US and Iran are holding their second round of talks about Iran's nuclear programme on Tuesday in Geneva as Iran said it will close the Strait of Hormuz for several hours as it holds live

fire military exercises and the United States ramps up its military forces in the region.

As the talks began, Iranian media announced that Iran had fired live missiles toward the Strait of Hormuz, and said it will close the Strait for several hours for "safety and maritime concerns." This is the first time that

Iran has closed parts of the Strait, an essential international waterway, since the US began threatening Iran with military action. Iran on Monday announced a maritime military exercise in waterways that are crucial international trade routes through which 20 per cent of the world's oil passes. Iran previously held

a live fire drill in the Strait of Hormuz several weeks ago but did not announce closures.

The semi-official Tasnim news agency, which is close to the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, said missiles launched inside Iran and along its coast had struck their targets in the Strait

*(Contd on page 5)*

# 'India gives 33% more data than US'

NEW DELHI, Feb 17 (ANI)

**G20 SHERPA** and former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant on Tuesday emphasised that while Artificial Intelligence is set to disrupt every sector and way of life, its evolution must be guided by three pillars- accessibility, affordability, and accountability.

Further, he warned that without a framework of "Digital Public Infrastructure" (DPI) to make Artificial Intelligence, risks creating a deeply unequal global society."

Speaking on the transforma-

tive power of AI on the second day of the India AI Summit 2026 in New Delhi, Kant highlighted a significant disparity in how Large Language Models (LLMs) are currently trained, noting that the Global South, and India in particular, is the engine room of AI development.

"The important thing is that today we in India. I mean, if you look at open AI, Chat GPT, we are providing more data than the United States of America, 33% more data than what the United States of America do," Kant said.

*(Contd on page 5)*

Read Editorial  
**'AI FOR ALL'**  
on page 8



Visitors during the India AI Impact Summit 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Tuesday.

(PTI)

## Adani commits \$100 billion to sovereign AI infra

AHMEDABAD, Feb 17 (IANS)

**THE** Adani Group on Tuesday announced one of the world's largest integrated energy-compute commitments, a direct investment of \$100 billion to develop renewable-energy-powered, hyperscale AI-ready data centres by 2035.

The initiative will establish a long-term sovereign energy and compute platform designed to position India as a global leader in the emerging Intelligence Revolution.

The investment is expected to catalyse by 2035 an additional \$150 billion across server manufacturing, advanced electrical infrastructure, sovereign cloud platforms and supporting industries.

Together, this is projected to create a \$250 billion AI infrastructure ecosystem in India over the decade.

"The world is entering an Intelligence Revolution more  
*(Contd on page 5)*

# Tarique Rahman sworn in as B'desh PM

President Shahabuddin also administers oath to 25 Ministers and 24 State Ministers at the ceremony, attended by several leaders from neighbouring countries, including India and Pak

DHAKA, Feb 17 (PTI)

**THE** Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader Tarique Rahman was on Tuesday sworn in as Bangladesh's new Prime Minister, marking a new beginning for the country after a nearly 18-month period of political



Tarique Rahman, Chairperson of BNP, takes oath as Prime Minister of Bangladesh from President Mohammed Shahabuddin (L) at the National Parliament in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Tuesday. (AP/PTI)

uncertainty and lawlessness under the rule of the interim Government led by Nobel

Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus. He represented India at the ceremony held at the open space of the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad



Newly-elected members of the BNP take oath.

Laureate Muhammad Yunus. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, accompanied by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, repre-

presented India at the ceremony held at the open space of the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad in presence of Bangladesh's top political and military brass. President Mohammed (Contd on page 5)

## BNP, Jamaat at loggerheads

DHAKA, Feb 17 (PTI)

CRACKS begin to appear in Bangladesh politics once again after BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami clashed over oath-taking on 'referendum'. Jamaat-e-Islami's newly elected Members refused to take the oath after victorious BNP declined to take the pledge as members of "Constitution Reform Council". (Details on last page)