

Modi, Finnish President inaugurate 11th edition of Raisina Dialogue

NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (ANI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated the 11th edition of the Raisina Dialogue, India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, along with Finnish President Alexander Stubb, who is also the Chief Guest for the three-day event.

Prime Minister Modi was also accompanied by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during the inaugural session.

The dialogue, which brings together global policymakers, diplomats, and thought leaders, focuses on key global and regional issues, including economic cooperation, security challenges, and emerging geopolitical trends.

The three-day dialogue is scheduled from March 5 to March 7. The 2026 edition, themed "Samskara - Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement", will see participation from representatives of 110 countries, including Ministers, former heads of state and Government, members of parliament, military commanders, captains of industry, technology leaders, scholars,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during the inaugural session of 11th edition of Raisina Dialogue, India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, in New Delhi on Thursday. (ANI)

journalists, and youth leaders.

Samskara represents the legacy of identity that allows civilisations to assert themselves, embrace diversity, and progress through continuous refinement.

Around 2,700 participants are attending in person, while millions worldwide are expected to follow the proceedings through digital platforms.

Finnish President Stubb calls for new world order

NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (ANI)

FINNISH President Alexander Stubb, during his keynote address at the Raisina Dialogue 2026 on Thursday, highlighted India's rising global influence, calling it a

Polling peaceful in Nepal with 60% voter turnout

■ By Shirish B Pradhan

KATHMANDU, Mar 5 (PTI)

TENS of thousands of people voted on Thursday in Nepal's first general elections since violent Gen Z protests toppled the K P Sharma Oli-led coalition Government, with corruption and generational change in leadership as the main issues in the politically fragile country.

The election is being closely watched by India, which hopes for a stable Government in the politically fragile Himalayan nation to take forward the developmental partnership between the two sides.

"The election to the House of Representatives has been conducted peacefully and enthusiastically," said acting Chief Election Commissioner Ram Prasad Bhandari. According to



People wait in queues before casting their votes in Nepal general elections, at a polling station in Lalitpur on Thursday. (PTI)

preliminary estimates, 60 per cent turnout was registered during the voting, he said.

The newly-formed Rastriya

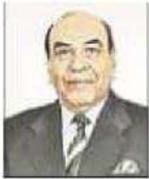
Swatantra Party (RSP) led by former rapper Balendra Shah, who was also the Mayor of

(Contd on page 5)

Jishnu Dev Varma Mah's new Governor



Jishnu Dev Varma, Mah



Lt Gen Hasnain, Bihar



R N Ravi, West Bengal



T S Sandhu, Delhi LG

NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (PTI)

JISHNU Dev Varma has been appointed Maharashtra Governor to replace Acharya Devvrat as part of major gubernatorial appointments effected by President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday night.

Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi has been appointed West Bengal Governor and Lt General Syed Ata Hasnain (retd) named new Bihar Governor.

Ravi succeeds C V Ananda Bose, who resigned earlier in the

day. President Murmu has accepted Bose's resignation, a communique issued by her office said.

Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar will discharge the functions of Governor of Tamil Nadu, it said.

Vinai Kumar Saxena, Lt Governor of Delhi, has been appointed as Ladakh's LG in place of Kavinder Gupta, who has been named Himachal Pradesh Governor.

Taranjit Singh Sandhu has been named Delhi LG, the com-

C V Ananda Bose resigns as WB Governor ahead of State polls

KOLKATA, Mar 5 (PTI)

INA sudden move days before the Assembly elections in West Bengal are scheduled to be announced, Governor C V Ananda Bose resigned from his chair in New Delhi on Thursday evening.

A "shocked" West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that Tamil Nadu Governor and ex-Deputy NSA, R N Ravi, will hold additional charge of West Bengal following Bose's exit.

Bose, who was appointed West Bengal Governor on November 17, 2022, told PTI: "Yes, I have resigned. I have

(Contd on page 5)

munique said.

Himachal Pradesh Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla has been made Telangana Governor in place of Jishnu Dev Varma, who

has been appointed Maharashtra Governor. Nand Kishore Yadav has been appointed Nagaland Governor, the communique said.



Sri Lanka lets second Iranian ship dock in Trincomalee, evacuates 208 on board

COLOMBO, Mar 5 (PTI)

Sri Lanka on Thursday allowed a second Iranian ship to dock at the eastern port of Trincomalee and evacuated all 208 personnel on board, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake said, a day after another Iranian frigate was sunk near the island nation.

In a televised address, Dissanayake said the vessel, IRINS Bushehr, had sought permission to enter Sri Lankan waters, citing an engine failure.

"We wanted to remain neutral while dealing with a humanitarian response," he said, adding that Sri Lanka's role was limited to responding to a request from one party involved in the conflict.

"No one deserves to die. Every life is precious," the President

said. He also criticised Opposition parties for attempting to politicise the situation.

"We won't succumb to pressure. We will maintain our neutrality," Dissanayake said.

According to the President, the ship had 208 personnel on board, comprising 53 officers, 84 cadets, 48 senior sailors and 23 seamen, all of whom were evacuated after the ship was allowed to dock.

Earlier in the day, Government spokesman and minister Nalinda Jayathissa had told Parliament that a second Iranian ship was waiting in Sri Lanka's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the coast of Panadura after seeking emergency assistance.

He was responding to a query by opposition leader Sajith Premadasa. Jayathissa had said

the government was deliberating on the appropriate course of action while seeking to safeguard lives and maintain regional stability.

Sri Lanka's territorial waters extend 12 nautical miles from its coastline and belong fully to the country. Further, from 12 to 200 nautical miles is the EEZ, where international maritime laws apply, but Sri Lanka mainly has rights related to economic activities, not military operations, he explained.

The ship, according to Jayathissa, awaits in EEZ close to the maritime boundary but out of its territorial waters.

The development comes a day after Sri Lanka on Wednesday said it had recovered 84 bodies of Iranian sailors killed after a US submarine attack sank the Iranian frigate

IRIS Dena off Galle, the island's southern coastal town.

The injured crew members rescued from the ship are currently receiving treatment in hospitals in Galle.

"They have lacerations, one of them has a leg fracture and another needs hip treatment," a health official said on condition of anonymity.

The inquests on the 84 bodies of the perished Iranian sailors would be conducted on Thursday at the Karapitiya hospital in Galle, where the injured are receiving treatment. The ship was returning home from Visakhapatnam in India after a naval fleet review exercise.

While the Sri Lankan Navy refused to give reasons as to what caused the vessel to make a distress plea, US War Secretary Pete Hegseth said on

Wednesday that it was a US submarine that sank the Iranian warship in international waters.

On Wednesday, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath had told Parliament that an emergency message was received by the Sri Lanka Navy and Coast Guard at 5:08 am regarding a sinking ship named IRIS Dena, located about 40 nautical miles off Galle.

Sri Lankan Navy spokesperson Commander Buddhika Sampath said, "We are only concerned about our obligation to rescue them as first responders under international maritime obligations."

The US and Israel have launched a massive joint attack on Iran since February 28. The war has extended to almost the entire Gulf region with Iran's retaliation.

PM Modi calls for swift end to West Asia, Ukraine conflicts

NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (PTI)

WITH West Asia on the brink of a wider regional war, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday called for a “swift end” to the escalating conflict in the region saying no issue can be resolved through military confrontation.

Modi’s remarks following his wide-ranging talks with Finnish President Alexander Stubb came as the United States and Israel’s war with Iran entered the sixth day with both sides launching fresh strikes, significantly heightening tensions across the region. Stubb strongly backed India’s bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, arguing that it is of “utmost importance” along with larger reform of the global multilateral system to reflect the current geopolitical realities.

In his media statement, Modi said the India-Finland relationship in the digitalisation and sustainability is being given the shape of a strategic partnership that will energise cooperation in many high-technology areas including AI, 6G telecom, clean energy and quantum computing.

The two sides also agreed to deepen cooperation in key sectors such as defence, space, semiconductors, and critical minerals.



PM Modi with Finland President Alexander Stubb during a bilateral meeting, at Hyderabad House in New Delhi. (PTI)

The crisis in West Asia figured prominently in the Modi-Stubb talks.

China lowers economic growth target to 4.5-5 pc



Chinese President Xi Jinping applauds during the opening session of the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing. (AP/PTI)

■ By **K J M Varma**
BEIJING, Mar 5 (PTI)

CHINA on Thursday lowered its GDP target to 4.5 to 5 per cent for this year in the face of Trump's trade tariff war, the worsening

global crisis following the US-Iran war and headwinds in the domestic economy, owing to property market slump and unemployment crisis.

The target close to that of last year was announced by Chinese

China hikes defence budget by 7 per cent

BEIJING, Mar 5 (PTI)

CHINA on Thursday hiked its defence budget to about 1.91 trillion yuan (USD 277 billion), an increase of seven per cent from last year in yuan terms, as part of its efforts to ramp up rapid modernisation of Armed Forces to catch up with the US military.

Flanked by Chinese President

Xi Jinping and other top leaders at the opening session of the National People's Congress (NPC), Premier Li Qiang presented his annual work report in which he proposed to hike defence spending to roughly 1.91 trillion yuan (USD 276.9 billion in dollar terms) for the 2026 fiscal year, a seven per cent year-on-year increase, state-run *China Daily* reported.

Premier Li Qiang in his work report presented to the annual National People's Congress (NPC), the country's parliament, which opened here on Thursday.

China has been setting a five per cent target for the GDP for the last three years amid growing domestic economic challenges. This year, the target is lowered to 4.5 per cent to 5 for the first time. China's economy grew by 5 per cent last year to USD 20.01

trillion, riding high on the robust exports despite US tariffs, while domestic consumption, its bugbear, remained sluggish.

Thursday's opening session is being attended by President Xi Jinping and over 2,000 deputies.

Presenting his work report, an annual feature, Li said the Government targets an economic growth of 4.5 per cent to 5 per cent this year and will strive for better in practice.

IAF Sukhoi-30 fighter jet loses radar contact in Assam; search on

GUWAHATI, March 5 (IANS)

A SUKHOI Su-30MKI fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) lost radar contact during a sortie over Assam's Karbi Anglong district on Thursday, Defence officials said.

According to the Defence Public Relations Officer (PRO), the fighter aircraft went missing from radar contact during what was described as a routine mission, prompting an immediate response from the Air Force and other security agencies.

"An IAF Sukhoi-30 aircraft has lost radar contact. Air Force teams have been launched to ascertain the facts and verify the situation," the PRO said.

Initial reports indicate that the aircraft was flying over the hilly terrain of Karbi Anglong district when communication with ground control was suddenly lost.

Search and rescue teams from the Air Force, along with personnel from the local adminis-

tration and other security agencies, have been mobilised to locate the aircraft and verify the exact circumstances surrounding the incident.

Officials said more details regarding the aircraft's last known position and the number of personnel on board are still being ascertained.

Sources in the defence establishment said the area where radar contact was lost consists largely of dense forests and mountainous terrain, which could make the search and rescue operations particularly challenging. Rescue teams are coordinating closely with the local administration and other security forces to carry out the operation in the area.

The Sukhoi-30MKI is among the Indian Air Force's frontline multi-role fighter aircraft and forms a crucial component of India's overall air Defence capability. Incidents involving Sukhoi-30MKI aircraft have occurred in the past as well.